

TimeWar

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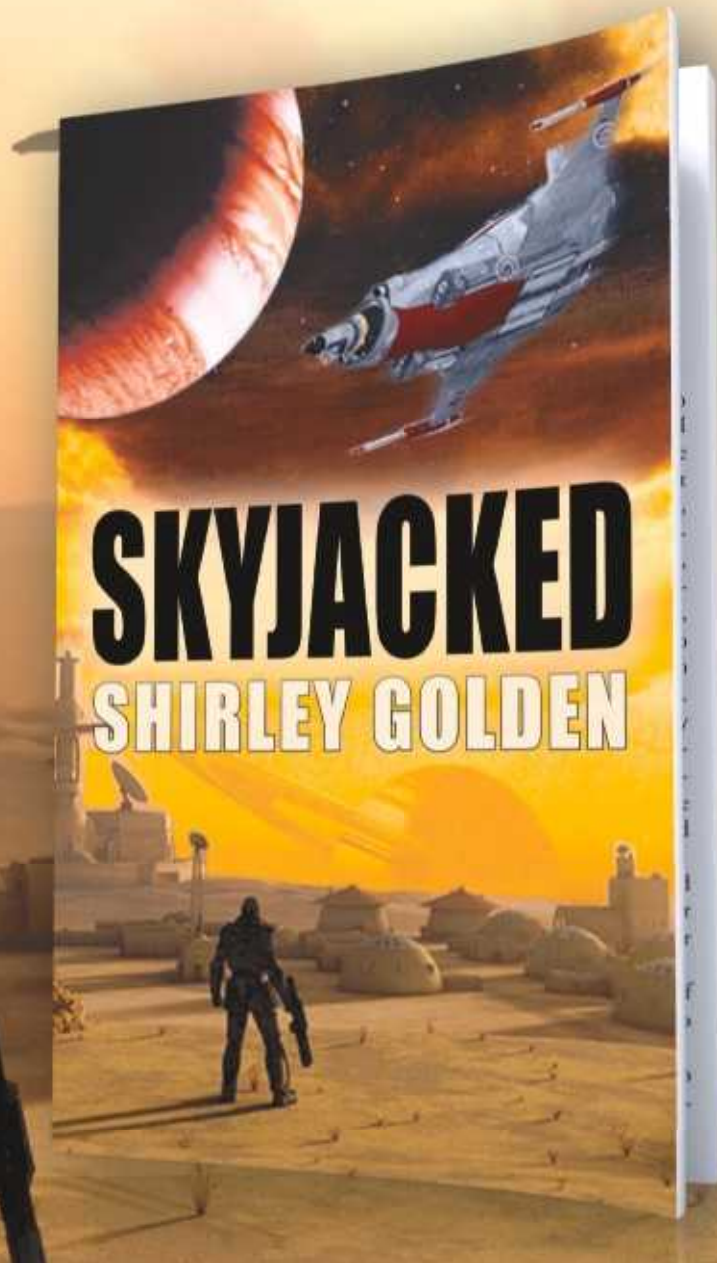
ALSO INSIDE

AMERICAN GODS // KEVIN SMITH // RESIDENT EVIL 6
JUMANJI // CHARLIE ADLARD // EMERALD CITY // THE OA
PREVENGE // *BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED // FORTITUDE

Digital Edition

ISSUE 128 www.scifinow.co.uk

Corvus Ranger is thrown into the ultimate adventure, a star-strewn odyssey where the greatest enemy in the universe may very well be himself....



**Skyjacked is available now from
Amazon and all good bookshops**



By now, all you fans of small-screen superheroics – specifically of The CW variety – will have no doubt watched the *real* TV event

of the year: the four-pronged 'Invasion' crossover between *Arrow*, *The Flash*, *Legends Of Tomorrow* and *Supergirl*, and be sat waiting for everything to start all over again post-mid-season finales.

The good news? You haven't got long to wait. The great news? Even better things are on the way, as we found out in our conversations with the creators and showrunners of some of our best-loved TV series not only in the superhero sub-genre, but in sci-fi in general.

Even so, it would be remiss not to take a look back too, as we run a post-mortem on the characters that helped make the shows what they are, although this doesn't come at the expense of us peering ahead into the timestream to discover exactly what on Earth-2 The CW has planned for us.

In among all this, there is plenty more to get excited about. Firstly, the directors of *The Lego Batman Movie*, *The Great Wall* and *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* take us through the movies you'll be talking about first thing this year; the creators of exciting-looking *X-Men*-inspired *Legion* tell us why the *Breaking Bad* comparisons are justified, and we talk to Bryan Fuller about his adaptation of *American Gods*, as well as taking the time to reflect on the career of fantasy icon Neil Gaiman.

Take a trip through the TimeWarp this month, and you'll discover exclusive interviews with *Donnie Darko* director Richard Kelly, *Doctor Who* star Sophie Aldred and the writers of adorable Amblin classic **batteries not included*, as well as a lovingly heartfelt complete guide to the works of Douglas Adams.

Welcome to 2017. Here's hoping for a great one!

Steve

Steve Wright
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT ALIEN: COVENANT

Maybe we're over-analysing things, but the poster for *Alien: Covenant* is a masterclass in simplicity being harnessed in the most effective manner possible. Just like, "In space, no one can hear you scream" sold us *Alien* in the best way possible, the instruction to "Run" – plus the even less subtle apparition of the Xenomorph's face – is similarly apt. Understandably, the series looks to be emphasising the series' connections to the glory days of the franchise rather than *Prometheus*, which is something that we can't argue with. Until the trailer is released, we'll feast our eyes on this, terrified to look away.



PORTAL

06 American Gods

Showrunner Bryan Fuller on what makes Neil Gaiman's work so brilliant.

08 Jumanji

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson talks pranks, co-stars and giant centipedes.

14 The Art Of Rogue One

Delve behind the scenes of the first *Star Wars* spin-off.

FEATURES

18 Arrowverse

The CW's creative minds tease the epic future of *Arrow*, *The Flash*, *Legends Of Tomorrow* and *Supergirl*.

32 The Lego Batman Movie

The director of the Dark Knight-flavoured *Lego Movie* spin-off tells us why everything about it is *awesome*.

36 The Santa Clarita Diet

Timothy Olyphant reveals all on his upcoming Netflix show.

38 Legion

Why Noah Hawley's new series isn't like other superhero shows.

42 Sleepy Hollow

The stars of TV's haunted town discuss the Season Four changes.

44 Neil Gaiman

Looking back at the life and achievements of fantasy's greatest author.

48 Kevin Smith

The Geek King reveals all about his latest offering, *Yoga Hosers*.

50 The Great Wall

How Chinese cinema is starting to tackle Hollywood in a big way.

54 Prevenge

We get the Lowe-down on the pregnancy horror with a **SciFiNow** first: a guest-starring baby at an interview.

REVIEWS

63 Rogue One: A Star Wars Story

Was the first Anthology movie a roaring success?

71 Arrowverse Crossover Event

Supergirl, the Flash and the Green Arrow* walk into a bar... (*and, like, a million other superheroes).

Plus...

A Monster Calls, *Underworld: Blood Wars*, *Monster Trucks* + more.

BOOK CLUB

74 The Word And Void trilogy

Why you need to read Terry Brooks' prequel to the *Shannara* series.

76 Beginner's Guide: Cyberpunk

Learn about the origins of *Blade Runner* and what makes the genre a sci-fi institution.

Plus...

One-on-one with Charlie Adlard + all the latest reviews.

TIMEWARP

88 Douglas Adams

We go to the end of the universe and back to celebrate one of the greatest authors of our lifetime.

96 *batteries not included

The writers of the Amblin classic discuss what was so special about working with Steven Spielberg.

Plus...

Donnie Darko, *Doctor Who*, *Ghost In The Shell* and the ultimate test of *Dollhouse* trivia.





32



54



104



50



96

MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which comic character would you like to see in the Arrowverse?



Steve Wright
Editor

A. Deadpool
For the Slade Wilson #bantz if nothing else. There will be blood...



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor

A. Swamp Thing
Because the world needs Swamp Thing right now.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer

A. Dazzler
She's a disco-dancing, roller-skating superhero. There are no downsides.



Jon Wells
Art Editor

A. Gene Simmons
He will bring a musical vibe to the team, along with some Crazy Nights.



Jen Neal
Production Editor

A. Mystique
I just want to see Diggle's response when she shifts before his eyes.

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Your first look at the next issue of SciFiNow

PORTAL

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings



PRAISE BE

Bryan Fuller tells us why *American Gods* will blow your minds

WORDS
JONATHAN
HATFULL



Why wouldn't we include this Bryan Fuller photo?

“IT'S ABOUT THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE EYES OF PEOPLE WHO WERE WORSHIPPED AT ONE POINT, AND ARE NOW LOST”

BRYAN FULLER

You won't be surprised to learn that we've got very strong feelings about Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, and we're willing to bet that if you're reading this then you do too.

The prospect of a TV series based on the modern classic would normally fill us with a mix of elation and dread, but knowing that it comes from Bryan Fuller and Michael Green, it's mostly just pure excitement, especially after that stunning San Diego Comic-Con trailer we saw in July.

"It was mostly excitement," grins Fuller when we ask how he felt when he realised that he was going to be the one to adapt such a beloved book. "Because both Michael and I were so enthusiastic about the book and the world that Neil created, and the

opportunity for conversations that we don't usually get to have because they're political and religious in nature. We get to engage in that fearlessly, because that is the nature of the book, so I think maybe 98 per cent excitement, maybe two per cent not necessarily nervousness, but a little bit of caution."

For the uninitiated, *American Gods* begins with Shadow Moon (*The 100*'s Ricky Whittle) being released from prison early following the death of his wife Laura (*Sucker Punch*'s Emily Browning). While travelling home, Shadow meets the charismatic and mysterious Mr Wednesday (the brilliant Ian McShane), who offers him a job as his bodyguard. Shadow is initially resistant to the idea, but he's intrigued by this grifter, who brings him into an incredible world of gods and the middle of a war that could destroy them all.

As much as we're mourning the loss of *Hannibal* (and we really are, by



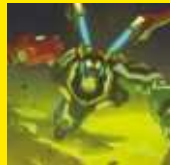
The incredible talent behind *American Gods*.

the way), we couldn't be more thrilled that Fuller is the one tackling *American Gods*, and he assembled one of the best TV casts in recent memory, with Whittle leading an incredible ensemble that includes iconic names such as Peter Stormare, Pablo Schreiber, Cloris Leachman, Crispin Glover, Orlando Jones, Kristin Chenoweth and Gillian Anderson.

This murderers' row has been gifted characters that have been significantly expanded from their counterparts in the original novel. Fans will tell you that Shadow's back-from-the-dead wife Laura only appears intermittently, while characters like



The Rock welcomes us back to the jungle for the surprise sequel



Rhys Darby talks Season 2 of Netflix's action-packed animation



Sofie Gråbøl on returning in the second season for more terror



Former Son of Rambow Bill Milner on embracing tech for his new film

WHO'S WHO IN AMERICAN GODS



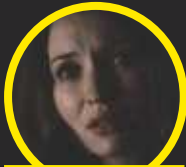
SHADOW MOON
(Ricky Whittle)

Good-hearted ex-con who is a little lost after being released from prison and losing his wife. He's about to go on a hell of a journey.



MR WEDNESDAY
(Ian McShane)

Great fun to be around, but keeps his cards close to his chest. He's a grifter and con man, and has a way with the ladies.



LAURA MOON
(Emily Browning)

Shadow's wife. The love of his life. She's died at the start of the book, but she comes right back. "Who said I died, puppy?"



BILQUIS
(Yetide Badaki)

As a prostitute, the Queen of Sheba gets her johns to worship her before consuming them through her vagina. Yep.



MAD SWEENEY
(Pablo Schreiber)

A lanky leprechaun who's partial to a drink and packs a mean punch. A decent guy, but gets moody when he's boozed up.



ZORYA VECHERNYAYA
(Cloris Leachman)

One of three sisters living in an apartment with Czernobog, and they're awake at different times of day...



CZERNOBOG
(Peter Stormare)

Czernobog has a fatalistic sensibility, and is prone to making wagers. Don't get on the wrong side of his hammer.



MR JAQUEL
(Chris Obi)

Together with Mr Ibis, Mr Jaquel runs a funeral parlour. He's respectful and professional, but he'll eat bits of the bodies.



THE IFRIT
(Mousa Kraish)

A former djinn, now a taxi driver in New York. Occasionally he'll come across someone who makes his eyes burn.



MR WORLD
(Crispin Glover)

Not much is known about Mr World, but he seems to be the one orchestrating the new gods and putting their plans into action.



TECHNICAL BOY
(Bruce Langley)

One of the New Gods, he's a snotty brat who has been given great power by our dependence on tech. He's dangerous.



Meet the New Gods, including Technical Boy (Bruce Langley).



The goddess Bilquis (Yetide Badaki) will be unforgettable.



Working for Mr Wednesday (Ian McShane) isn't easy...

Bilquis (Yetide Badaki) made a huge impact, but really only have one or two chapters of story time. With the first season of the show set to end at the World Tree, Fuller and Green are obviously taking full advantage of every opportunity to explore this world and expand on the characters as much as they can.

"We can take tangent journeys to greater explore Media and The Technical Boy and Mad Sweeney

and Bilquis and Laura, who simply weren't as represented in the novel because it was Shadow Moon's story and Mr Wednesday's story," Fuller enthuses excitedly.

It's thrilling to think of these characters being brought to life by some of the most exciting visual storytellers on television, and Fuller assures us that we can expect *American Gods* to be one of the best-looking shows around next year – not that we expected anything less from the *Hannibal* showrunner.

"I love that the aggressive visual style matches the poignancy of these character stories that are not about gods, but about fundamental human experiences through the eyes of people who have been worshipped at one point and are now lost and searching for a new role in a world that has forgotten about them, and that's very exciting," he enthuses. We can't wait.

American Gods will air in spring 2017.

GAME ON

Dwayne Johnson reports in on the upcoming *Jumanji* sequel

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

A second *Jumanji* film has been on the cards since 2012, albeit as a remake that no one really wanted. Over time, the project has slowly morphed into a sequel that actually sounds like it could be a pretty awesome Christmas blockbuster.

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson is leading the cast as a brave jungle explorer. Technically, he's playing a geeky high-school kid named Spencer, but once he starts the game he transforms into a fearless, ripped avatar called Dr Smolder Bravestone. Seriously, everything we hear only makes us want to see it more.

PLAYER ONE

Where the original *Jumanji* gave us a look at Alan Parrish's time outside the game after years trapped inside, the reboot will peer inside it when four unsuspecting teenagers are sucked in and forced to live as avatars in order to escape. "It was really an opportunity to tell a great story and introduce a fun mythology to a whole new generation," says Johnson. "Our story is a continuation: the idea of starting out as teenagers who are all going through their own frustrations as we all do as teenagers, and then being reincarnated into heroes."

PLAYER TWO

Kevin Hart, Jack Black and Karen Gillan are joining Johnson as avatars in the game as tiny genius Moose Finbarr, bookworm professor Shelly Oberon and Amazonian warrior Ruby Roundhouse respectively. "I have worked with Kevin in the past, and we have always had a blast," Johnson tells us. "We have always had chemistry. And then Karen Gillan and Jack Black... You never know with an ensemble cast what kind of chemistry you are going to have, because everyone has different personalities, but we really lucked out. We really jelled nicely."

PLAYER THREE

The original *Jumanji* kept its filming locations quite standard, mostly making use of the landscapes of British Columbia and New Hampshire, but the sequel took things up a notch by filming the in-game jungle scenes on location in Hawaii. "I think that is a nice juxtaposition, because Hawaii is so beautiful," Johnson explains. But the Aloha State also added an element of danger. "While the jungles are very beautiful, lush and green, there are big venomous spiders that you have to avoid. We have medics on set with us in case somebody gets bit!"

PLAYER FOUR

"People are constantly getting bit by the centipedes, and centipedes grow very big," Johnson tells us. It's not all bad though, as he uses this to his advantage when it comes to pranking his co-stars. "Kevin Hart is definitely afraid of these things," he laughs. "It works out great, because I am like a shark smelling blood in the water, and I mess with him every day, causing him to have heart attacks, and it's very fun!"

PLAYER FIVE

All pranks aside, Johnson's priority was finding the right times to honour the late Robin Williams. "That was part of my messaging," he explains, "Paying homage to Robin and making sure his family was proud of the movie and what they saw. I think we hold on to that, and that is the awe-inspiring part, because the other stuff will come: the fun, action and big comedy."

Jumanji will be released in cinemas on 29 December.



© Instagram / TheRock

© Eva Rivaldi Celebrity and Live Music Photographer



Bad news, Hiccup and Toothless fans: *How To Train Your Dragon 3*'s release date has been pushed back to 1 March 2019. Sad face.



In the least surprising piece of news of all time, Marvel's *Luke Cage* has been renewed for a second season.

Universal is clearly regretting *Dracula Untold*, judging by the face that it is no longer part of their Monsters universe.



8

Sense8, which recently released a Christmas special, is getting ready for a full second season, set to land on Netflix on 5 May.



THE PLAN MAN

Rhys Darby talks *Voltron: Legendary Defender* Season Two, his sci-fi origins and what happens when his character, Altean advisor Coran, takes a trip into the wormhole... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Season One left us on a cliffhanger – where is Season Two picking up?

It starts after Haggar's destruction of the wormhole. The team are scattered across the universe. Coran and Allura are trapped inside this wormhole in the castle ship, and there are some pretty hilarious results.

They go through this wormhole, and Coran starts to age backwards. Each time they go through a different spectrum of the wormhole he starts to get younger and younger.

Is Coran like you in real life?

I definitely have that kind of high-strung, authoritarian

personality. In my group of friends, I'm the one who barks out orders and gets them to do things. Like in *Voltron*, not many listen! [Laughs] I'm more about my schedules and agendas than is necessary.

As the leader, I find it important to write things down and hand out graphs. Coran gets to get out there a bit more [in Season Two]. He has a sense of adventure and such a big and interesting back story of his life. He's a treasure trove of information, and we get to see a little bit more of that.

What's the energy like in the studio when you're recording?

It's fantastic! There's a lot of action in the show, so we read the script for the first time, then we get excited about where it's going, what the situation is, and we pretty much live it there in the room. We do a few takes, but for the most part there's a lot of excited energy. I try to make sure that I look like Coran. If I have time, I'll have a moustache.

Have you always been a science fiction fan?

I loved escapism ever since I was a kid, and I guess one of the reasons I joined the army was so I could

escape into this made-up world of me rescuing trapped POWs. That never happened. I was in the New Zealand army and rescued a couple of sheep.

After about four years serving there, I woke up and realised that this reality isn't really what I want. What I wanted was to be an actor playing in these roles, not actually doing it. That's how I ended up in Hollywood.

In my dreams, at some point I would have turned the military into going to space, end up on some galaxy garrison like in *Voltron*, and be some sort of attack pilot heading to Mars. But luckily I realised that wasn't going to happen and got out of the signals corps. I have a lot of respect for it, but they are more relegated to cleaning up after civil disasters now. Here I am, acting in cartoons and real-life crazy situations like *X-Files* now.

You're still a hero among sheep!

Yeah! They're probably thinking, "We'll never forget that guy. Stuck in the snow, we could see the fence but we just couldn't get to it! Then those two, wonderful, almost feminine hands grabbed us and I got thrown onto a truck. Long live you, Rhys!"

Voltron: Legendary Defender will be available on Netflix from 20 January.

7

The number cast members confirmed for *Star Trek: Discovery*, including Sonequa Martin-Green, Doug Jones and Michelle Yeoh.

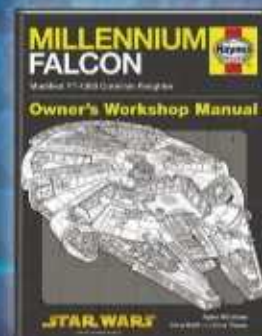
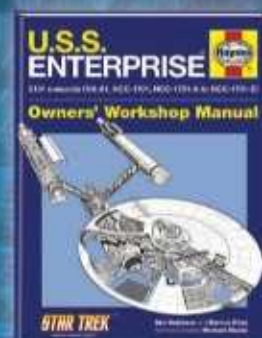
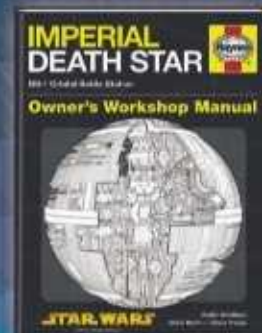
After being recast in *Batman Forever*, Billy Dee Williams will finally play Two-Face – in *The Lego Batman Movie*, no less.



The Get Down's Justice Smith better get a decent pair of trainers; he's just been added to the cast of *Jurassic World 2*.



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FORTITUDE SEASON 2 “ISN’T JUST TWIN PEAKS ON ICE”

Sofie Gråbøl on returning to TV’s most dangerous town WORDS MILES HAMER

Wrap up warm for a frosty reception this January as Sky Atlantic heads back to chilly thriller *Fortitude* for a second season of shenanigans in the off-kilter community.

The first season saw a mammoth discovery (literally), an uncommonly cross polar bear, and a plague of wasps upset the formerly peaceful balance of the icy resort. What unpleasantness is next for Season Two?

Speaking with series star Sofie Gråbøl, who plays stern Governor Hildur Odegard, we ask her what’s ahead for the much-anticipated second series following the cataclysmic events of the first.

“The nice thing about Season Two is that it really picks up. It’s certainly an ongoing story. The town is really destroyed, and the people in it are really destroyed – all of the positions they had and the certainty you get of their roles in the community. It seems everyone is a little bit stripped of who they were. And on top of the shock of the ending of the first season is that they are now pressured, and everyone’s starving really!”

Sounds fun. But what of the new character intake? Among the confirmed cast are former *ER* regular Parminder Nagra, original *Misfits* star Robert Sheehan, and Michelle Fairley (*Game Of Thrones*). We wonder how this fresh influx of actors has altered the dynamic of the ensemble show. “When you start a second season all of us original cast members get a little bit anxious about who’s

entering our flock. You know, ‘Who are these people?’ You’re a little on your toes. But when we met everyone in Iceland at a very remote place, everyone was even lovelier than before!”

Another addition to *Fortitude*’s population is everyone’s favourite *Innerspace* actor, Hollywood star Dennis Quaid, playing fisherman Michael Lennox. “He is the most generous actor,” Gråbøl enthuses. “He has such a presence and is so funny.”

With a sense of humour mentioned, we wonder if we’re finally going to see a softer side to her character. We’re not talking *Walking Dead* Governor levels of evil malice here, but so far she has shown to be pretty ruthless. Sofie doesn’t agree. “I never considered her as ruthless really. She is obviously a person who has chosen power, and

that always comes with a certain amount of cynicism. Deep down she is extremely loyal: the mother of the community. And sometimes a mother has to be hard to do what’s best. But this time she definitely reveals a big heart.”

Keeping tight-lipped about upcoming plot developments (“I’m not allowed to say anything, and I’m hopeless with secrets!”), Sofie responds to press descriptions of *Fortitude* as ‘*Twin Peaks* on ice’ with good grace. “I take that as a great compliment, but *Fortitude* very much has a tone of its own.”

With more snow-bound skulduggery than you can hurl a snowball at, *Fortitude* is well and truly back. If the first episode is anything to go by then you can definitely expect grisliness.

Fortitude: Season Two will air on Sky Atlantic in January.

“I TAKE THAT AS A GREAT COMPLIMENT, BUT FORTITUDE VERY MUCH HAS A TONE OF ITS OWN”

SOFIE GRÅBØL



PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING

The official title for the sequel. So not *Maelstrom* then.



Suicide Squad spin-off *Gotham City Sirens* – starring Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn – is keeping it in the family with the news that David Ayer will direct.



John C McGinley-starrer *Stan Against Evil* has been confirmed for a second season. Hopefully we’ll see it in the UK soon.





FIVE THINGS WITH BRIT MARLING

The co-creator and star of *The OA* on creating mind-bending sci-fi

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 Film vs TV

Brit Marling broke out as the star and co-writer of superb indies *Another Earth* and *Sound Of My Voice*, and now she's back with co-writer and director Zal Batmanglij for their first TV series. "We love the mind-bender, but usually in feature films you spend the first hour setting up the rules and the sci-fi space, and by the time you set up all those rules you have like a half hour to play in that space, and then you've gotta end the movie!" she laughs. "So it seemed like long-format was a space that it was really suited to."

2 Creating a mystery

Marling and Batmanglij's projects have combined big ideas and big heart, and *The OA* takes those elements and turns them up to 11 with a twisty narrative and incredible revelations. "There were so many moments when I thought, 'We have really bit off more than we can chew, it's just so big!'" Marling laughs. "In its ideas, in its length. But you really end up clinging to the characters. You find all these collaborators, and together you sort it out along the way, if that makes sense! But yes, it's daunting!"

3 Breaking the format

It's hard to imagine *The OA* working on a traditional network. The scripts play with TV structure, and Marling tells us that the goal was to create something more like a novel. "Netflix allows you to tell a story according to how the story wants to be told," she enthuses. "You can liberate yourself from the idea that everything has to be up front in the pilot. You could never imagine a novel doing that. Imagine if you opened Murakami and Murakami was giving you a proof of concept in the first chapter!"

4 Collaborators and creators

Marling and Batmanglij have known each other since college, and after two films and one TV series, she tells us that their working relationship has continued to evolve. "It's really deepened," she tells us. "We have a lot of trust in each other, and we really push each other. You reach a place where you know that you're both after the same thing, which is the story. It's nice to have a partner who really believes that you're just bringing the story to bear."

5 Giving the story to the world

Having worked in indie film, Marling tells us that she's used to the staggered release schedule that sees her work take a couple of years to go from festivals to global audiences. Netflix is obviously a little different. "I don't know that I've fully comprehended it. You make stories to give them away and they don't belong to you after that, and it's less about what you thought you were doing and more about how does it move people on the various shores it washed up against. I think sometimes there are a handful of reactions to something where it makes you feel that it was worth everything you gave up."

The OA is streaming now on Netflix.

THE FUTURE STARTS TODAY

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

The people behind political sci-fi *The White King* on why we're all living in a dystopia...

In 2015, dystopian science fiction *The White King* – based on the novel by Hungarian author György Dragomán – might have seemed a bit far-fetched, taking place in a future dictatorship, far removed from our reality. This year, however, the film's events feel considerably more likely to actually happen.

Its writers and directors, real-life married couple Alex Helfrecht and Jörg Tittel, joke that the film seems to have gone from a sci-fi to a documentary. In *The White King*, there are no underground bunkers, death arenas or nuclear fallout. It would even seem idyllic, with its setting's riverbanks and lush countryside, if it wasn't for the fact that it was being ruled under a totalitarian regime, with CCTV watching every house.



"You don't have to have to have a dark, monochromatic look to show that it's a dystopian film," explains Helfrecht. "Actually, there's evil lurking in the supermarket. It's in a look. It's the guy coming out of the shower, smoking a fag, watching you. It's this weird speaker in the wall, spurring out propaganda."

What makes *The White King* unique is that the story is told through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy called Djata, whose father is taken away in the first scene. Djata spends the rest of the film trying to understand the world he lives in, and get his father back.

"We are all children right now who have been abandoned by adults, you know; we've been abandoned by the authorities," says Tittel. "They've either been taken away from us in a non-democratic system, or they've abandoned us and turned their backs on us. I think we all feel like these innocent children right now, trying to figure out what the future is bringing for us. Do I run? Do I stay inside? Do I escape this place? Where do I go from here?"

The White King will be released in cinemas on 27 January 2017.



Jonathan Pryce intrigues as Djata's grandfather.



Maureen (Kristen Stewart) gets the shock of her life.

SMELLS LIKE MEAN SPIRIT

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Writer/director Olivier Assayas on his supernatural drama *Personal Shopper*

It seems like intense human drama is on the cards in Olivier Assayas' new film *Personal Shopper*, which divided audiences at Cannes last summer with its story of a personal shopper communicating with the dead.

Assayas says he finds the paranormal intriguing because it's a part of our imagination. "The paranormal is our thought process," he says. "We are aware that there is more to the world than the material world. Our feelings, constantly give us a sense that there are dark areas, or certainly areas that we're not completely aware of or that we can't exactly define."

He's also a believer when it comes to ghosts, saying that we're constantly having conversations with them: "Ghost" is a code word for the presence of the departed and anyone that has had the experience of grief, of mourning. The conversations we have with the departed never really stop. I think what we call 'ghosts' is a way of externalising something that's very much part of our inner conversation."

Kristen Stewart stars in the film as said personal shopper



Maureen, who lives in Paris, hates her job, and also happens to be a medium. Stewart was very familiar with Assayas' working style, having previously starred in his 2014 film *Clouds Of Sils Maria*.

"For some reason I was a bit superstitious, and I didn't admit, even to myself, that I was actually writing for Kristen," says Assayas. "It was only when I gave her the screenplay, when she read it, loved it and related to it that I realised how much she had been instrumental in creating the film... If it had been another actress it would have been a completely different film. The thing that I needed was someone as grounded as Kristen, so connected to everyday material life. She's like us in that sense."

Personal Shopper is in cinemas from 17 March 2017.



THE ONLY ONE

John Wick co-director Chad Stahelski is taking on the responsibility of helming the *Highlander* reboot.

That *Inhumans* TV series is very much still alive, as *Iron Fist*'s Scott Buck has been pegged to serve as showrunner.



SEASON 2

Dirk Genty's *Holistic Detective Agency* fans, rejoice! It has bagged itself a second season.

Anne Rice recently got the rights to *The Vampire Chronicles* back, and has wasted no time in planning a TV series.



WORDS JEN NEAL

GET READY FOR 2017

We've been treated to loads of brilliant trailers of late – here are some of the best...

BLADE RUNNER 2049



1 Welcome Back

Blade Runner is back! Instantly, we're on board with Gosling pacing at night, but... is that snow?



2 Giant Broken Head

We're chalking this up to Ridley Scott loving the symbolism of statues of giant heads.



3 Piano Man

This touch of the keys is a lovely callback to the original, and gave us chills. That music...



4 The Old Magic

There he is. Rick Deckard. "I did your job once. I was good at it." Damn. We're in.

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING



1 You're not the Avengers

Peter quips, punches and stops a bank robbery with people dressed in crappy Avenger masks.



2 Back to school

Peter's a kid, and he's back at school. Awkward Homecoming dance please!



3 Grey area

Tony Stark is back, and he's offering Peter some solid advice. We love Peter's science! nerd tee.



4 Vulture! Vulture!

We haven't seen him before in the movies, and we're loving the Michael Keaton resurgence.

THE MUMMY



1 3, 2, 1- ACTION

It's a Tom Cruise film, and the action in the trailer pretty much sets the tone for the trailer.



2 He's aliveeeeeee

Despite looking like he was, Tom Cruise's character isn't dead! We're flabbergasted too.



3 The Mummy returns...

The sarcophagus is creepy enough, but you wait until you see the actual mummy from inside it...



4 ...and she's hella scary

We told you! What the hell are those eyes about? We're so excited for Sofia Boutella!

WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES



1 Journey

The apes have picked up a human mascot in the form of a somewhat grumpy little girl.



2 The Colonel

"All of human history has led to this moment," says Woody Harrelson's Colonel.



3 Fighting back

It's all-out war as the apes prepare to take on the Colonel's well-stocked military base.



4 All or nothing

Caesar comes up against it ('it' being the barrel of a gun) when the humans start to attack.

WALTON GOGGINS

The latest person to be added to the *Tomb Raider* cast. He will be playing an as-yet-unknown villain.



Ghostbusters' Kate McKinnon will be starring as Grunhilda in *The Lunch Witch*, an adaptation of Deb Lucke's YA novel.

\$290 MILLION

How much *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* made in its opening weekend.

8

The number of projects *Arrow* creator Greg Berlanti has now he's directing the *Little Shop Of Horrors* remake.



ROGUE ONE: THE ARTISTS' STORY

Discover the early concept art from Star Wars' first anthology film WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

Everyone loves a good coffee-read, and with the recent film release, *The Art Of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* is timely indeed.

Brought to you by Abrams Books and accompanied by forewords from production designer Doug Chiang and director Gareth Edwards, this delves straight into the Lucasfilm vault and some of the early designs for the film, showing you just how the myriad characters and locations evolved from sketch to screen. Here's a preview of what to expect...

DEATH STAR DISH VERSION 4 (HOBBINS)

The most terrifying weapon the galaxy has ever seen – here depicting the scene showed most prominently in the first teaser trailer.



SAW'S THRONE ROOM VERSION 1C (BROCKBANK)

While this early take on the extremist Rebel warrior sees Gerrera with more of his original limbs, his life support apparatus hints at the extent of his injuries.



KRENNIC COSTUME 3 (DILLON)

"If you blink and you'll miss it, but there's a character on the Death Star in the original film who's sitting alongside Tarkin. He's got a really fine moustache, slicked-back hair, and a great white tunic. We thought that tunic would be a perfect look for the villain of the piece." Dillon





The Art of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story by Josh Kuhns and Lucasfilm Ltd is available to buy now, published by Abrams Books.

BAZE WITH BEARD 23 (DILLON)

"Baze is like a combination of all your favourite elements of *Star Wars* characters. The partial armour, the boiler suit, the cool gun, the backpack. It was really driven by what we thought audiences would like – what you'd want to see in a mercenary character like this. Gareth really responded well to the red, so we put some red in Chirrut as well." David Crossman



JYN (FELICITY JONES) IN CAP (DILLON)

One of the sketches for Jyn Erso, created once the casting of Jones had been confirmed.

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Son Of Rambow's Bill Milner stars in *iBoy*.

GAME OF PHONES

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

iBoy star Bill Milner on superpowers and seeking revenge

The story of *iBoy* starts when 16-year-old Tom, played by *Son Of Rambow's* Bill Milner, accidentally smashes his iPhone and the fragments become embedded in his head. Obviously, your brain is going to start doing weird stuff when a thing like that happens, so it's not long before Tom starts exhibiting strange new powers.

"The rest of the story isn't so much this superhero getting his revenge," says Milner. "The way I look at it, it's quite a psychological film. It's about how a teenage boy deals with having such power. Does he use his powers to get his own back, or for the better?"

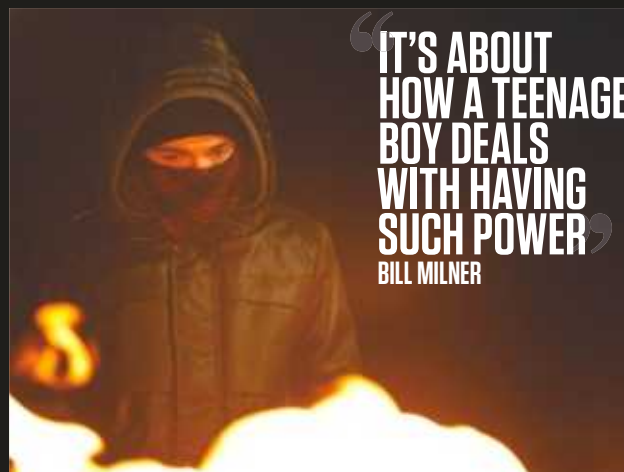
Oddly, his *Son Of Rambow* co-star Will Poulter was set to star, but he dropped out and Milner was cast. The film (which

also stars Maisie Williams, Rory Kinnear and Maisie Richardson) took director Adam Randall almost five years to complete, but Milner reckons the time was worth it.

"[Adam Randall] is brilliant," he tells us. "The whole film lands itself to using your imagination and getting excited about the opportunities and possibilities. That's what we did with the powers this character gets and the situations.

"It was nice to throw ideas around with Adam and laugh, which I think is always important. The whole crew were incredible. It was one of the closest crews I've ever worked with. We're still in touch now!"

iBoy launches on 27 January on Netflix.



“IT'S ABOUT HOW A TEENAGE BOY DEALS WITH HAVING SUCH POWER”
BILL MILNER



MEMORY BANK

The first time we put *Arrow* on the cover was back in issue 75. This is before the Arrowverse, back when it was (maybe) a twinkle in the executive's eye. We spoke to them about how they found success with the first season and their full-series order, along with Stephen Amell talking through how he gets into Oliver's mindset and Willa Holland on the departure from her work on *The OC* and *Gossip Girl*.

Elsewhere, we looked at the 2012 Christmas special of *Doctor Who*, where we saw Clara return as a different version of Soufflé Girl, and Eleventh Doctor Matt Smith told us about how he still has the toy Dalek a child gave him when he first started on the show. Cute!

We also jumped back over the pond to the set of *Primeval: New World*, where the hopes and dreams of the ITV drama were pinned on an expanded universe. It didn't end so well, and there were only ever ten episodes, but everybody was so excited when we spoke to them.

"Can Disney offer a new hope to the *Star Wars* franchise?" was a question we asked, and were 100 per cent unashamed about the pun. We explored the universe and how it had expanded and theorised all sorts years before we knew what *Episode VII* was even about. We also looked at the *Star Wars* toys – we urge you to check out Obi-Wan's dodgy plastic braid. Your life will be all the brighter for it.

And finally, we hit up our cover with the quote, "A Justice League movie is a waste of money!" courtesy of comic genius Mark Millar. So, uh, about that...

BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters

WORDS JEN NEAL

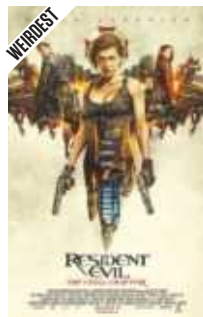
WINNER



THE CIRCLE

The labyrinth-style of *The Circle* poster, though simple, looks divine. We love the simplistic red and white look of the poster, it doesn't give anything away about the plot of the film and isn't focused on the characters. It's different and we like it. It doesn't even try and sell itself to you using its first class cast: Tom Hanks, Emma Watson, Karen Gillan, Bill Paxton and John Boyega!

WORST



RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER

Honestly, at first glance it looks more like a *Batman* poster than an advertisement for the final *Resident Evil* film. We thought that's what it was until we saw Milla Jovovich front and centre and had to re-evaluate. It's not 'weird' as in 'odd', but it's a different choice of approach.

MOST ARTISTIC



RUNNER UP



ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

It's simple, and gets the Death Star point across, while also looking kind of like a set of blueprints. You might have noticed, we love the simplistic style...

RUNNER UP



THE MUMMY

The sarcophagus in the freighter plane tells you all you need to know about the *The Mummy* reboot: it's modern and probably going to be dark and gloomy.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Most of the promotional posters for the *Harry Potter* prequel were focused on the human element, which is all well and good, but it's called *Fantastic Beasts*. When these posters by Chinese artist Zhang Chan were unveiled, we celebrated. Done in the gongbi style, they feature the Niffler, Swooping Evil, Demiguise, Bowtruckle, Occamy and Thunderbird. We want them all!



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This month, we caught up with director David Yates and the cast of *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, including Katherine Waterston, Alison Sudol, Dan Fogler and Ezra Miller, to talk about the overdue return to the wizarding world. Get misty-eyed as they discuss their Hogwarts houses, their favourite *Harry Potter* characters, the book deaths that messed them up the most and more, while also learning behind-the-scenes secrets about 2016's most magical blockbuster.

If space is more your style then check out our interviews with Justin Lin and the cast of *Star Trek Beyond*, including Zachary Quinto, Chris Pine, Sofia Boutella, Karl Urban and John Cho, as they talk about new characters, missions, and the legacy of the *Original Series*.

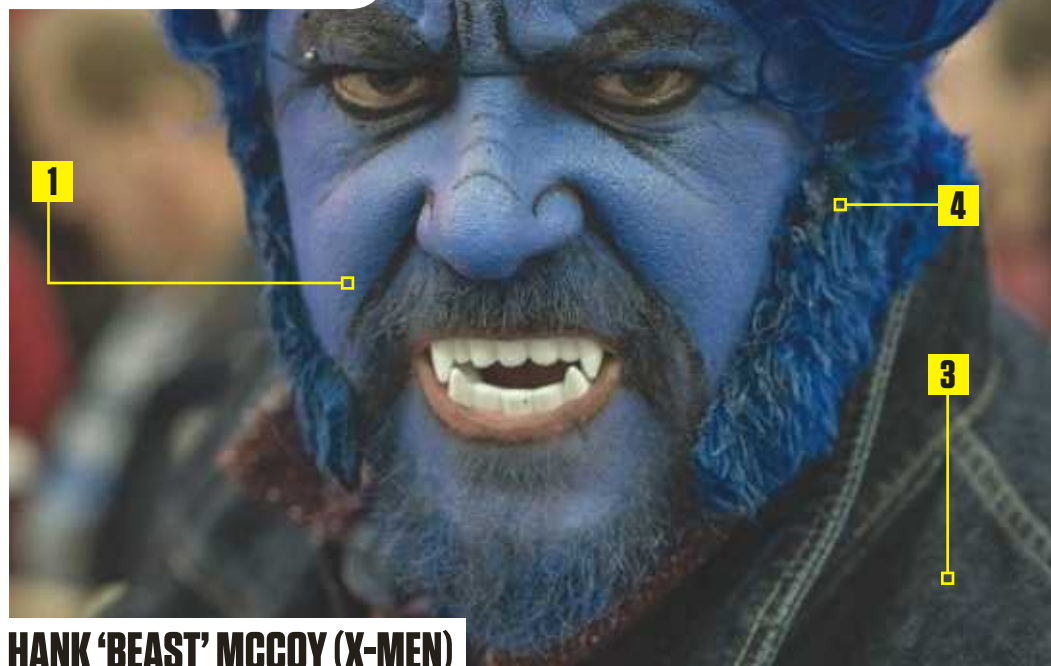
Netflix addicts can't afford to miss our Google Hangout with the cast of *Sense8* (all eight of them, *at the same time*) as they discuss the making of all your favourite scenes from Season One (yes, including the orgy scene), and look ahead to what's next for the show.

We also have exclusive glimpses at indie favourites like *Darling*, *Abattoir* and *Cooties*, as well as news, reviews and more on everything from *Deadpool* and *Batman V Superman* to *10 Cloverfield Lane*.

Open up your YouTube app and subscribe today!

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow
or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



HANK 'BEAST' MCCOY (X-MEN)

COSPLAYER: DAMIAN FROM: HERTFORDSHIRE, UK PHOTO: DOMINIC BEDFORD PHOTOGRAPHY FACEBOOK: /DAMIANHAMMONDCOSPLAY

THE CHARACTER

1 Hank 'Beast' McCoy of *X-Men* is a powerful creature that everyone fears when they first see him. He looks terrifying, and people run away because they are scared of him, as he's different. But when you actually talk to him you realise that he is one of the nicest people you will ever meet. I can relate to this, as I have been told I look menacing, but I am actually a gentle giant!

THE COSTUME

2 I will be completely honest: I have always prided myself on trying to create really good cosplays for as little money as possible, and I thought that Beast would be easy to put together. I have quite a lot of clothes that Beast wears in the movie *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, I found a blue wig from my local fancy dress shop, and bought blue Snazzaroo face paint and some plastic fangs.

THE DESIGN

3 I love the style of the clothes from that period. I own clothes similar to them, but I did have to buy a denim jacket. When I was looking for a wig, it was really difficult to find one that was just how I wanted it, so I bought a Twenties blue flapper wig with a fringe. I then back-combed it to oblivion so the fringe stuck up off my head, and used loads of hairspray to style it crazily.

THE ACCESSORIES

4 Beast is extremely hairy, so I had to add extra bits of fur onto my face. I decided to create some mutton chops from some blue furry material and sewed them onto the wig, which I stick to my face with Prosaide cream. But the main part of my costume is my make-up, which I feel I have mastered now, especially the extra details like frown lines, eyebrows and a good set of sharp teeth!

HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



ROGUE ONE: MEETING DARTH VADER

tinyurl.com/j2zpkg3



DRACULA NOT PART OF MONSTERS UNIVERSE

tinyurl.com/hhep2sw



DOCTOR WHO SERIES 10 TO STAR MATT LUCAS

tinyurl.com/jfc7pn2



PACIFIC RIM & GODZILLA SEQUEL TITLES

tinyurl.com/hudfhw



AQUAMAN ADDS MAIN VILLAIN

tinyurl.com/z622grw



THE FUTURE

FIVE YEARS AFTER OLIVER QUEEN'S ISLAND ISOLATION CAME TO AN END, WHAT WAS ONCE ONE A SINGLE SHOW HAS MORPHED INTO AN ENTIRE EMPIRE OF SUPHEROIC AWESOMENESS. THE CREATIVE MINDS BEHIND **ARROW**, **THE FLASH**, **LEGENDS OF TOMORROW** AND **SUPERGIRL** SHED SOME LIGHT ON **THE ARROWVERSE'S EXCITING FUTURE** AND TELL US **HOW THE CW WILL CONTINUE TO REWRITE THE TV RULEBOOK**

WORDS EDWARD GROSS BOXOUTS JEN NEAL



IF AMBITION WAS A SIN, THEN THERE WOULD BE LOTS OF DAMNATION DISPENSED TO THE CREATORS OF THE FLASH, ARROW, SUPERGIRL AND LEGENDS

Of Tomorrow. Whether it's altering the timeline in subtle and not-so-subtle ways (we're talking to you, 'Flashpoint'), or bringing all four shows together for a mega-crossover event, the powers that be seem determined not to take the easy way out – a trend that is set to continue.

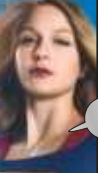
"As writers," says *The Flash* executive producer Aaron Helbing, "We try to tell the best stories we can. Sometimes that involves us painting ourselves into a corner, and when we do that, that's where the great ideas come from.

We kind of relish the challenge, to be honest, and I definitely don't think we hold back on anything. Everything is on the table at all times: every character, every storyline."

That's certainly true of *The Flash*. As of Season Three, Barry Allen's (Grant Gustin) messing around of the timeline has consequences for everyone: Cisco (Carlos Valdes) has lost his brother, Caitlin (Danielle Panabaker) has Killer Frost powers, and the seeds for Wally's (Keiynan Lonsdale) evolution into Kid Flash have been sown. New villains have been unleashed, like the mysterious Savitar, who makes an ominous prediction that one teammate will betray them, one will suffer a fate

worse than death, and the other will actually die – with a foreshadowing apparently revealing the identity of the unlucky deceased to be Iris (Candice Patton). Coupled with the impact his actions have had on the characters in other shows – like John Diggle's (David Ramsey) daughter becoming his son, and the *Legends Of Tomorrow* cast having their pasts altered in as yet unexplained ways – and you have a clear indication that the shows' creators aren't afraid to shake things up.

"The beauty of *The Flash*, for instance, is we can do things like 'Flashpoint.' We can have Barry travel back in time and make interesting decisions. When you have a show ➤



COVER FEATURE

Arrowverse



➤ and a character with those abilities, basically anything is possible. When we introduced the multiverse, the sandbox got even bigger, and there were more interesting things in there that we got to play with. And the actors have a lot of fun at the same time. Last year we did our Earth-2; Iris was a little different, Joe was a little different, a lot of the characters were different.

"Then when we do a 'Flashpoint' storyline, there's a distinction with a difference, again, with the characters. That kind of revitalises a lot of people. As storytellers, we get to continually go into these interesting worlds with these interesting characters who are similar yet slightly different, and it just makes the storytelling that much more interesting and exciting."

THAT'S CERTAINLY THE CASE ON **ARROW**, A SHOW THAT HAS GONE THROUGH SOMETHING OF AN INTERNAL REASSESSMENT THIS YEAR, AN

approach that has come about largely thanks to the feeling that the series may have gotten a little too 'out there' in its fourth season, which introduced magic and brought aboard such characters as Damien Darhk and John Constantine. Admittedly, there was little wrong with

This season of *The Flash* has centred around the 'Flashpoint' story arc.



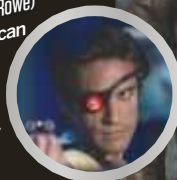
the performances of Neal McDonough or Matt Ryan (the latter's presence was particularly welcome after the sad cancellation of his own show). This year, however, those more fanciful elements have been traded out for oft-mentioned groundedness and a return to gritty storytelling that the show initially nailed its colours to.

The central themes are more of team-building and betrayal, with new members Wild Dog (Rick Gonzalez), Mister Terrific (Echo Kellum), Artemis (Madison McLaughlin) and Ragman (Joe Dinicol) joining existing members Oliver (Stephen Amell), John Diggle and Felicity Smoak (Emily Bett Rickards), while Thea (Willa Holland) takes a back seat. But as the mid-season finale shows, the road to a happy ending is a long one: on the hunt for new villain Prometheus, Oliver is tricked into killing Billy – Felicity's new lover – and a fugitive Diggle is recaptured, although all these catastrophes are tinged by the discovery of an apparently not-dead Laurel (Katie Cassidy).

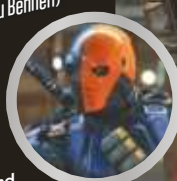
Marc Guggenheim, an executive producer on both *Arrow* and *Legends Of Tomorrow*, offers of the evolution of the former, "I would say with *Arrow* we went into the season with a very clear mission statement for ourselves and a clear plan, which is that Oliver was going to try to reconstitute his team, and certainly the evolution has been in Oliver learning how to work with a new group of people and those new people learning how to work with him.

IT'S GOOD (SOMETIMES) TO BE BAD The best (and worst) villains of the Arrowverse BEST

DEADSHOT (Michael Rowe)
Even though they can no longer use him because of the abysmal *Suicide Squad* movie, they make the most of Rowe in various guest spots. Earth-2 Deadshot, anyone?



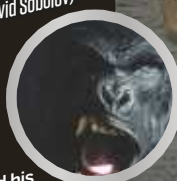
DEATHSTROKE (Manu Bennett)
If you don't spend some of your time growing "Slade" in Manu Bennett's voice, what do you find fun? The recurring threat and general badassness puts him on our list.



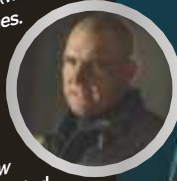
TRICKSTER (Mark Hamill)
You can't argue with a genre legend who is willing to have a bit of fun. Hamill reprising his role from the 1990 *Flash* series proves to be a gem.



GORILLA GRODD (David Sobolov)
Mostly we were amazed that they were able to do convincingly do Grodd on a CW budget. Also, we totally feel him and his dislike of bananas.



DANNY BRICKWELL (Vinnie Jones)
We love Vinnie Jones. Judge us all you like, but he always makes things better. When Danny Brickwell showed up in *Arrow* he added a light-hearted tinge to the violence.



After a brief reprieve, Diggle returned to Team Arrow.



Earth-1 stands protected from alien threats by the mass of vigilantes.

By the mid-season finale, that template is pretty well set. It positions us in the second half of the season to now, now that the dynamic is set, to start having fun with it, and start twisting it a little bit. By the end of the mid-season finale there were a couple of twists that upset that dynamic that we've established. We're going to be bringing in new recruits starting with episode 12, so we're going to continue to put the dynamic on its head.

"One of our mission statements going into the season was we wanted Oliver to recruit this new team, but we wanted the membership of that new team to be somewhat fluid. We wanted it to even be a little bit more rotated than we ended up doing, in large part because we thought, 'Oh well, we'll cast these roles, and we'll see which actors are popping and then get rid of the actors that are not popping, and then replace them with other actors and characters

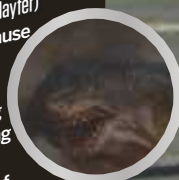
and then see how that works out.' One of the happy surprises of the season is that our casting choices have really paid off in spades. We've ended up with less turnover in the recruits than we had initially planned on or anticipated.

"I think the trick is to continue to find new stories to tell with Oliver," he elaborates. "Whenever any show gets into its fifth season, the show has to reinvent itself, otherwise you run the risk of becoming very repetitive.

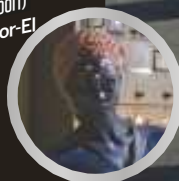
"One of the things we said about *Arrow* from the beginning was we wanted the show to evolve," he continues. "We wanted the season to have its own identity so no matter how many seasons it ran, you could watch an episode at random and immediately know what season it was from. For better or worse, I think we've accomplished that so far, and the challenge for us going forward is how do we continue to do that, but

WORST

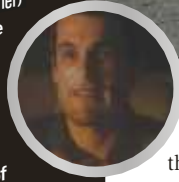
KING SHARK (David Hayter)
Maybe it was because the 'King Shark' episode followed the brilliant outing to Earth-2, but King Shark? Really? It was just all kinds of naff, and we really didn't like it.



INDIGO (Lara Vandervoort)
Smallville's Kara Zor-El deserved better than this cheap-looking version of Mystique. The make-up was terrible, her hair wasn't great, and the storylines were a bit bland.



SHRAPNEL (Sean Maher)
When *Arrow* made an attempt at the *Suicide Squad* (before Task Force X was shut down) Shrapnel was the weakest of the bunch.



BUG-EYED BANDIT (Emily Kinney)
Bee serious. How many bee puns are too many bee puns? Two? Not for these scripts. It was too much. So bad, we couldn't bee-lieve it (Sorry).



RED TORNADO (Ido Goldberg)
It's another case of a terrible villain in all-body colour make up. It was a good concept, but it was the execution was not brilliant. And he looked like a bit of a melty crayon.



also do it in a way that doesn't feel forced? There's a reason why the 'jump the shark' phenomenon is a real phenomenon: it's because if you're doing your job, you're constantly trying to push the show and push boundaries, but there's no clear delineation as to where 'too far' is. So it's a bit of a 'feel' thing, but I'm really excited. The response we've been getting to Season Five is absolutely wonderful, and I'm really optimistic and hopeful that people will continue to come along for the ride."

If they do – and assuming that the show is renewed for a sixth season – there will be a much bigger shake-up. For one thing, the flashbacks will essentially come to an end, meaning that the approach next year will be different. In some sense, it will likely result in some form of reboot for the show. As executive producer Wendy Mericle ➤



COVER FEATURE

Arrowverse





➤ explains it, one of the things that the writers make a point of discussing while crafting the fifth season is what ideas might be better suited for the sixth, mostly because they need to be thinking about the 'end game'.

"When you're thinking about the end game of Season Five," she notes, "Those are the seeds of the next chapter. There's no question that it is going to be a reboot. Even as we're writing Season Five, it's the closing of that chapter. When we come back for Six, we're really looking down the barrel of, 'Well, we don't know how many more seasons we have. We hope we have six, we hope we have until Season Ten,' and then you start planting those seeds for what is going to sustain the show for another season or two or three or four."

"That is a tricky endeavour," Mericle adds, "but it's also exciting, because it gives you an opportunity to radically rethink the show. Not too radically, because you want it to still feel like *Arrow*, but we have a lot more real estate now because we won't have flashbacks in every episode. We do have the luxury of having created that structure in the past, and if we want to use it for the one of our characters or for a new character, to get into their heads or to understand their back story more deeply, we have the advantage of having that in our arsenal to use. A lot of questions are raised, and I think we'll be answering those



Harry Potter's Tom Felton joined *The Flash* as CSI Julian Albert.

while hopefully really setting some of that stuff up in the finale this year. It's going to be a good challenge."

THE CHALLENGE EMBRACED BY SUPERGIRL, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE SHOW SWITCHED FROM THE MORE MAINSTREAM CBS TO THE HOME

of the other DC shows, the CW, is reaching back to its comic-book roots. This year, viewers have seen a more marked embracing of the idea of aliens on Earth, including the President of the United States (Lynda Carter) signing an alien amnesty act, plus the introduction of alien dive bars, fight clubs and a xenophobic movement against them, led by Lex and Lena Luthor's mother and the head of Cadmus.

"The show is different this season, and will continue to

“THE END GAME OF SEASON FIVE IS THE SEED OF THE NEXT CHAPTER. THERE’S NO QUESTION THAT IT IS GOING TO BE A REBOOT”
WENDY MERICLE

be different as we go on," executive producer Ali Adler notes. "What's exciting about having it on the CW is that they really have, since before day one, really embraced the DNA of the show. For instance, with the alien dive bar/cantina, we picked up this alien presence. We've really very much been able to bring that element out, as well as the idea of just living on an Earth that contains this alien culture. I think we probably would have done this on CBS, but very early on, The CW just had such a fluency in terms of *Arrow* and *Flash* and *Legends*."

This season, Adler admits, they wanted to embrace Kara's heritage and her life as an alien. "We touched on it last year a bit, and we just embraced the culture. We're really leaning into the idea that aliens exist on Earth, and we get into that alien amnesty act. That's really going to play a large role in what we hope to do throughout the end of the season. She is an alien, and we said last year with Fort Razz that there are many aliens on Earth. We hope to embrace that as Kara embraces herself."

She emphasises that for the rest of Season Two there will be an emphasis on the different relationships, and not just in terms of super villains: "It's our inter-personal connections, and so we really are loving the Lena/Kara connection, the Maggie Sawyer/Alex connection, Guardian and Winn... just really playing those different kinds of chemistry. My favourite is the Alex/➤





Kara continues to bring a ray of sunshine to every situation.

➔ Maggie connection. The fans are calling it 'Sanvers', and we embrace that wholeheartedly."

Alex Danvers (Chyler Leigh) has developed a relationship with police officer Maggie Sawyer (Floriana Lima), who is also a member of the Science Police, and that relationship will continue to grow. As Adler points out, Alex is a character who has kept secrets her whole life — the fact that her sister is an alien, that her parents worked with Superman — to the point where many of her own emotions got pushed aside. "I think it's really amazing that she gets to embrace who she is," muses Adler, "The way Supergirl got to embrace who she was in the first season."

ONE QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS WHETHER OR NOT SHE WILL EMBRACE CHRIS WOOD'S DAXAMITE CHARACTER MON-EL, WHO WOULD SEEM BE ON something of a hero's journey that will have him emerge in the form that comics fans are familiar with. Through

"I THINK IT'S REALLY AMAZING THAT SHE GETS TO EMBRACE WHO SHE IS, THE WAY SUPERGIRL GOT TO EMBRACE WHO SHE WAS IN THE FIRST SEASON"
ALI ADLER



The 'Invasion!' crossover event saw the residents of Earth-1 take on the alien Dominators.

STAR CITY CEMETERY

Rest in peace those we have lost

DINAH LAUREL LANCE
1985-2016

Beloved daughter, sister, friend and vigilante. Accomplished lawyer and the Black Canary

SARA LANCE
1987-2007
2014

Loving daughter, sister, friend. Kick-ass master assassin

THOMAS 'TOMMY' MERLYN
1985-2013

Beloved son and friend. Night club owner and ex-playboy

MOIRA QUEEN
1964-2014

Mother. Wife. Mayoral candidate and philanthropist

ROBERT QUEEN
1964-2014

Beloved father and husband. Founder of Queen Consolidated

RAYMOND PALMER
1981-2015

Beloved friend for whom the city was renamed in memoriam



much of the first half of the season, Kara (Melissa Benoist) has been trying to teach him what it means to be a hero — a lesson that hasn't always gotten through to him as he pushes back against the idea of using his super powers to help others. Wood, whose past credits include *The Carrie Diaries*, *The Vampire Diaries* and *Containment* (so tempting to add the word 'diaries'), while not offering up spoilers, refuses to pretend that Mon-El isn't on a hero's journey.

"We know where it's going," he smiles. "Everybody knows that it's moving towards a suit eventually. What it's going to look like, who knows? That is his story. He's finding the part of him that's based on who he was on Daxam, and part of that is the bias that you see come out with he and Kara when they have their differences, and they resent aspects of each other because of where they're from. She struggles with it more than he does, which I think is a brilliant



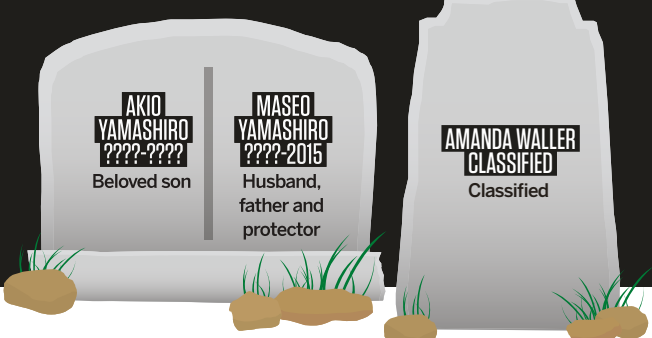
Nick Zano joined the *Legends* cast this year as Steel.

thing, to bring more of a human quality to her so that she's not just perfect. So she's got biases, too. She works through them quickly, which is nice.

"He's got a lot of stuff from his background, and he's new to this planet. The rules are different," Wood continues. "When he was there, it seemed like he was just living his life for himself, based on what he's told her so far. He hasn't been completely honest about everything, I can give you that. He has left some details out that she'll find out soon, and that will obviously change their dynamic."

It is safe to say that Mon-El has been a little bit of a cad in his life, but that's something that is likely to change. "He's now here, and we're starting to see him respond to someone who's trying to actually help him and make him better. At first he's resisting it, because he doesn't feel the same impulse to go save the world that she does. So, his story's going to become one of how does he gain that need? Where does that come from? It's something with the Clark Kent story that you don't really get, because he was already there when we met him. There's got to be a moment like the one in the pilot for Kara when she's like, 'I have to do this.' He's going to have one of those moments at some point, where he is self-motivated to pursue this as a purpose."

THEY MAY PREFER THE MONIKER 'LEGENDS' TO 'HEROES', BUT ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT, LEGENDS OF TOMORROW IS PERHAPS the wackiest adventure of the ➤





COVER FEATURE

Arrowverse

➤ four series. With its crew of good guys and bad – returning members Ray Palmer (Brandon Routh), Sara Lance (Caity Lotz), Jefferson Jackson (Franz Drameh), Martin Stein (Victor Garber) and Mick Rory (Dominic Purcell), along with newcomers Amiya Jiwe, aka Vixen (Maisie Richardson-Sellers) and Nate Heywood, aka Steel (Nick Zano) – travelling through time, dealing with time aberrations while trying not to screw up the continuum too badly along the way, there's a lot going on.

As executive producer Phil Klemmer explains it, this season the show “lucked” into a new conceit, where the characters destroyed the Time Masters and the Vanishing Point in Season One, which gave the team an epiphany at the top of the second season that there was no one to police time, so the responsibility had to fall to them.

“It’s the *Bad News Bears* fun of, ‘We have to do it! We’re going to make mistakes, and we’re going to screw things up,’” says executive producer Phil Klemmer, who notes that in year two the show has become more mission-based, and those missions are all based in history.

“It’s all about these marquee historical moments and these famous historical figures,” he says. “So we’re living much

more in the – I shouldn’t say ‘milieu,’ because people sound like jerks when they says that – milieu of history. It’s the fun of seeing our ragtag bunch of superheroes trying to do their job as they’re walking through the pages of history. To me, that’s been the fun of the show this year, and releasing them from the responsibility of saving the world has given them the opportunity to go on these smaller missions that, in a weird way, can be much more personal and just be a lot more fun.”

Indeed, they really have been let off the leash. With former team captain Rip Hunter (Arthur Darvill) MIA (revealed in mid-season finale “The Chicago Way” to be alive and working as an LA-based movie director in the Sixties), the team have encountered all sorts of famous historical figures, from Marie Antoinette to Al Capone. Even so, they’re still making mistakes and doing their best to function as a team in spite of their inherently dysfunctional nature – a formula that looks set to continue.

“The thing is, they’re not Time Masters, so it’s not always about restoring things back to the way they were,” continues Klemmer. “The sort of moral question at the centre of Season Two, or what it will become, is, ‘Wait, what is our job? Is it just to fix what was broken? There are a lot of parts of history that were broken to begin with,



Legends takes its characters throughout time and space.

“OUR LEGENDS WILL COME UP WITH A NEW DEFINITION OF THE JOB AS THE SEASON CONTINUES”
PHIL KLEMMER

and we have the ability now to go back and change things for the better.”

But it isn’t all as straightforward as that, with the team of Legends being filled with some unsavoury characters. “We’ve got some real dirtbags on our team, like Mick Rory, although he’s slowly rehabilitating his ways, but we also have a lot of do-gooders. People like Ray Palmer, who can’t resist the opportunities. So it’s not enough to put things back the way they were; our Legends will come up with a new definition of the job as the season continues.”

While the second half of the season



Kara tried her hardest to melt Oliver’s steely exterior.



of *Arrow* leant itself to a succinct description, *Legends Of Tomorrow* is, according to Guggenheim, a little “trickier”.

“*Legends* had to reinvent and relaunch the show,” he explains. “We had to really start everything from scratch, and I would say the way *Legends* operates in the second season is, if the first half of the year was about setting the table and establishing the new status quo, establishing the Legion of Doom, teasing the mythology and the larger MacGuffin for the whole season, then the second half of the season is about paying off all those things that were set up. We do get deeper into the mythology, we do get deeper into the Legion of Doom. We are starting to tell more serialised stories.

At the same time, we’re doing all that knowing that there’s a good chunk of our audience that actually prefers the standalone episodes. The episodes in the second half of the season are a little bit more like an interesting hybrid, where we’re doing standalone, have fun in the time period stories, but we’re also pushing the mythology forward more aggressively than we did in the first half of the year. I think you start to see the threads in the first half of the year, and in the second half of the year the threads start to get woven together.”

Arrow, *The Flash*, *Legends Of Tomorrow* and *Supergirl* will return to Sky1 later in the year.

HOW THE CW MADE SUPERGIRL GREAT(ER)

With a change in location and a budget cut, how could *Supergirl* possibly survive?

We entered panic mode when we found out that *Supergirl* was moving from its home on CBS to its child channel – and home of the rest of the Arrowverse – The CW. But there was good reason. The budget got slashed (*Supergirl* reportedly cost \$3 million per episode, and the pilot cost a stonking \$14 million), filming moved to home of basically all CW shows: Vancouver.

So what did we lose? Well, the most noticeable change was the absence of Calista Flockhart’s Cat Grant. Much of the action has now moved from CatCo to the DEO HQ. But even though that transposes most of the action, and their half-decorated ‘office’ is no longer in use, we haven’t at any point this season missed it. While Kara is pursuing a career as a reporter, it is rarely at the front and centre of the action (apart from when they seem to remember it as a plot device). We’re shocked to find that we would struggle to see how Cat would still fit in to this new setup, and have found ourselves not feeling the absence.

The budget that they do have has clearly been invested in the new home of the DEO. From the medical bay to Winn’s technical area and the training room, it’s all very dark and undercover base (even though it is now in a massive skyscraper). We also love the new alien bar that they have as a kind of *The Bronze*-from-*Buffy* hangout area.

You would think that a lack of budget would result in cheaper-



New faces have made Season Two more of a fresh start.



looking effects, but they seem to have mostly gotten around this by not having as many effects in the show, full stop. It’s easy to see where the \$3 million-an-episode budget went when you compare. But what seems to have gotten even better this season was the design of all of the characters, villains and other. The new aliens all look amazing, compared to the body-painted droids and aliens of Season One.

The most obvious change to the setup is that of the more character-driven arcs. Their relationships are explored more thoroughly, and characters that were mostly ignored when it came to their back stories (surprisingly the main culprit

here is Alex) have now been given a lot more attention. *Supergirl* has managed to make us weep and it’s not at the peril; it’s at the heart-warming and completely touching scenes between Kara and Alex and the entirety of Alex’s arc this season.

So while we might have worried about the show declining in quality, it has been consistently enjoyable, with many stand-out episodes, fun new characters (Chris Wood’s Mon-El is a particular delight), and brilliant new set and alien designs. If you’re yet to start Season Two, turn that frown upside down and do yourself a favour, because the Arrowverse really doesn’t get better than this.



We got to see Kara fangirl over the president, one Lynda Carter.

THE FIRST RULE OF SUPERHERO FIGHT CLUB

DON'T TALK ABOUT SUPERHERO FIGHT CLUB...

WORDS JEN NEAL ILLUSTRATION DAVID COUSENS



THE FLASH
NAME: Barry Allen

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
A can-do attitude, unashamed to ask his team for help beating the bad guys.



SPECIAL ABILITIES He's the fastest man alive.*
Time travel. Phasing through solid objects



ATOM
NAME: Ray Palmer

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
Money. Endless enthusiasm. Truly terrible sandwiches. Keen intellect.



SPECIAL ABILITIES Flight. Electricity projection, photon blasts. Can go super small



SPEEDY
NAME: Thea Queen

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
A rather defeatist attitude. Acts as the vocal conscious of the team.



SPECIAL ABILITIES Politically minded. Sharp aim. Minor assassin skills. Will cut a bitch



SUPERGIRL

NAME: Kara Danvers

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
Infectious enthusiasm. Clear sense of right and wrong. Can punch stuff really hard.



SPECIAL ABILITIES Flight. Bulletproof. Ice breath. Heat vision. X-ray vision. Actual puppy



FIRESTORM

NAME: Jefferson 'Jax' Jackson / Dr Martin Stein

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
Incredible scientific logic, paired with street smarts and mechanical skills.



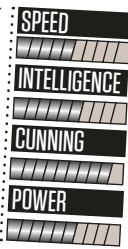
SPECIAL ABILITIES Flight. Matter transmutation. Nuclear absorption. Nuclear pyrokinesis.



WHITE CANARY

NAME: Sara Lance

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
A killer instinct, a fun demeanour and a knack for finding ladies in any time period.



SPECIAL ABILITIES Flight. Assassin skills. Badass. Knack for coming back from the dead



THE GREEN ARROW

NAME: Oliver Queen

WHAT THEY BRING TO THE TEAM:
The personification of Grumpy Cat. Oliver brings the realism to a gang of hopers.



SPECIAL ABILITIES Killer aim. Quick reflexes. Ruthlessness. Questionable leadership qualities

10

ALL-STAR EPISODES YOU MUST SEE!

WITH OVER 200 EPISODES ACROSS THE FOUR SHOWS, WE PICK OUT THE TOP 10 THAT WE LOVE THE MOST. TRUST US, IT WAS REALLY HARD!

WORDS JEN NEAL

ARROW

THE FLASH

SUPERCIL

LEGENDS OF TOMMOROW



Destiny

Season 1, Episode 15

Legends Of Tomorrow definitely struggled compared to its siblings, but the best outing it has given us so far was one of those episodes where you wish they hadn't done what they did. Captain Cold was by far our favourite of the *Legends*. His devil-may-care attitude and Wentworth Miller's slightly hammy acting just made him the best of the bunch. Sara and Snart team up to put a stop to the time ships, and discover the Oculus, which the Time Masters have been using to manipulate the timeline to facilitate Savage. Snart sacrifices himself when Oculus self-destructs, and we lose our favourite of the gang.

BEST MOMENT: Snart takes Druce down with him when the Oculus destructs.



Tricksters

Season 1, Episode 17

The Arrowverse is filled with little Easter Eggs and nods towards other characters, actors pasts or, in this case, those reprising their roles from the short-lived 1990 *Flash* TV series. Genre favourite Mark Hamill returns as the Trickster, having been imprisoned for his crimes, only for his son to make a come back and release him. We really love these throwbacks, like Henry Allen being the Flash on Earth-3, played by John Wesley Shipp who played the Flash in 1990. Hamill is suitably creepy, and it makes a change from being Luke Skywalker. Way to go on a career resurgence...

BEST MOMENT: Barry and Joe pay the Trickster a visit in Iron Heights, where he is suitably creepy, and give him twizzlers.

Hunted

Season 4, Episode 5

It was always a shame that *Constantine* never got up off the ground – we wish it had been established as a part of the Arrowverse the same as the others. Still, when Constantine showed up in *Arrow* as a guest star, it left us wishing that he was a forever star, or they resurrected his show for the Friday night superhero slot. That's available, right? Flashbacks show he appeared on Lian Yu, did some magic, and left Oliver with a whole other bunch of problems.

BEST MOMENT: Oliver gets a new tattoo courtesy of Constantine's magic, and it's super glowy and awesome.





Nanda Parbat

Season 3, Episode 15

With Oliver back in Starling City, Merlyn gets taken by Ra's al Ghul to Nanda Parbat, and due to his love of his sister, Oliver considers going to save him. Elsewhere, Ray has turned to obsessively working on his Atom suit, leading to him disappearing into pseudo hibernation, which get Felicity worried. To save him from himself (literally, he was about to blow himself up), she hacks his system and sets up a password that would "take him six hours to crack." In his sleep, Ray comes up with the final piece of the puzzle and makes his Atom suit fly.

BEST MOMENT: When Ray unfolds the piece of paper with the password on it, it simply reads "password". Genius.

World's Finest

Season 1, Episode 18

In our favourite of the crossover events, Barry accidentally ends up on Earth-38, having opened a portal. But Earth-38 doesn't have a Flash, or an Arrow; it has Supergirl and Superman, and it has *aliens*. The two leads are the most puppy-like characters in existence what could be sickly sweet just works, the actor's chemistry is infallible. The bad guys in the episode do leave something to be desired, but when Kara gets *that* excited about ice cream, you can pretty much ignore it.

BEST MOMENT: Cat Grant figures out that Barry is the Flash because "it's that or a Mormon".



The Climb

Season 3, Episode 9

Season Three undoubtedly has the best of *Arrow*, and the mid-season finale 'The Climb' left you genuinely feeling like they might have killed their main character. You know they wouldn't, but for a brief moment it felt like it. It even delivered on the emotional Olicity punch, which only added to the belief that maybe Oliver wasn't coming back from this, led on the mountainside, a little worse for wear.

BEST MOMENT: Oliver and Ra's al Ghul face off in an epic (and shirtless, thank you) fight.

Paradox

Season 3, Episode 2

The Arrowverse is always at its best when it's concentrating on its characters. In dealing with the aftermath of Flashpoint, Barry heads to Star City to talk to Felicity about what he did. With her advice, he returns to Central City and is honest about what he's done. We're also introduced to Tom Felton's Julian Albert who is this seasons replacement as antagonist for Harrison Wells. Exploring the changes and learning more about our key characters made this episode stand out for us, and set the bar for *Flash* episodes to come.

BEST MOMENT: Felicity drops the bombshell that Sara Diggle is actually now John Diggle Jr, the seemingly only difference.



The Scientist

Season 2, Episode 8

His name is Barry Allen, and he is *never* on time for anything. The introduction to Barry's character is perhaps what made *Arrow's* sister show work so well. Under the ruse of being on loan from the CCPD, Barry helps Oliver with a robbery case. Felicity and Barry become the most perfect of friends, get closer while working together. When he leaves he gifts Oliver a mask so he no longer needs to use the eye smudge.

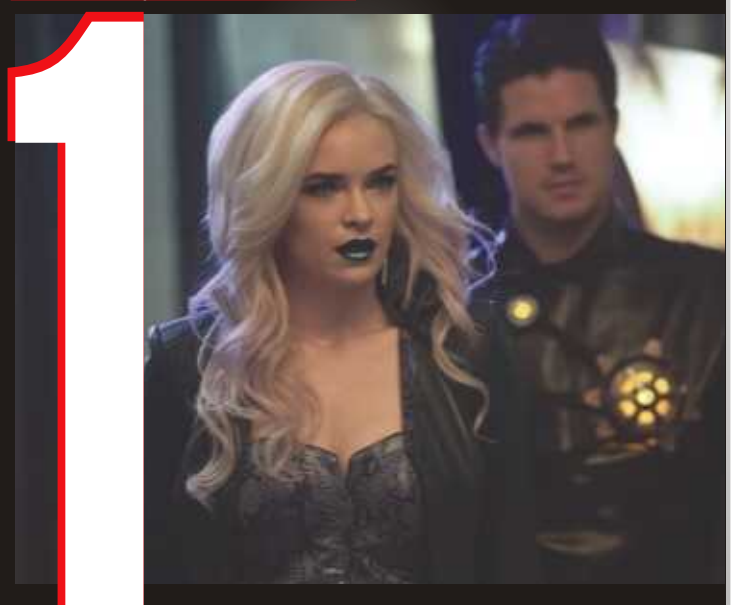
BEST MOMENT: Barry and Felicity work together in the lab, and he points out dangerous combinations.

Welcome To Earth-2/Escape From Earth-2

Season 2, Episode 13/14

Earth-2 is everything we wanted we wanted it to be. There were enough differences, from the art deco world stylings to the characters' jobs and roles: Barry the Geography teacher-looking CSI, Iris the kick-ass detective, Joe the jazz singer. Then there is Caitlin and Cisco the villains, Ronnie is alive, and so is Barry's Mum. Harrison Wells is a certified dick, but he's actually Harrison Wells this time, he has a daughter, and they're both awesome. Killer Frost is a badass, and Earth-1 Cisco and Barry appealing to her 'Caitlin' nature is a winning combination. Did we mention *Joe the jazz singer*?! Incredible.

BEST MOMENT: Barry and Cisco act like the adorable fools we know them as, taking selfies when they first cross over to Earth-2.



“CHANGING’ PUNCHED US IN THE GUT EMOTIONALLY MORE THAN ANY OTHER”

Changing

Season 2, Episode 6

Season Two has delivered many great episodes, but it is 'Changing' that has punched us in the gut emotionally more than any other. Alex's coming out to Kara had us shedding a tear. We've loved how they have handled her storyline so far, and the sisters' scenes have truly been the biggest highlight. The rest of the episode stood up too, and lighter moments featuring new favourite Mon-E! made it into an unmissable outing.

BEST MOMENT: Alex comes out to Kara in a beautifully acted and shot scene.



HE'S BACK

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

AS THE STANDOUT CHARACTER OF THE LEGO MOVIE, BATMAN IS GETTING HIS OWN STORY. WE SPEAK TO THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE DIRECTOR CHRIS MCKAY ABOUT DARKNESS, DEAD PARENTS AND MORE...



IN BLACK (OR VERY, VERY DARK GREY)

MAKING A BATMAN MOVIE ALWAYS COMES WITH CAVEATS. EVERY INCARNATION, FROM ADAM WEST AND MICHAEL KEATON ALL THE

way through to Christian Bale and Ben Affleck, has come with a weight of expectation from comic-book fans, concerned that the movie gives the Dark Knight his due.

Uniquely, *The Lego Batman Movie* has public good will on its side from the get-go. Spinning out of the universally loved *Lego Movie*, if all goes to plan then it will be the perfect antidote to the more pitch-black big-screen depictions of the character.

Even so, it's still a Herculean task. When we talk to director Chris McKay, two months before the film's release, he's still pulling late nights, making tough decisions and generally trying to finish it off.

"A lot of animated movies generally take, maybe at the fastest, three to five years, and we made this movie in about two and a half," McKay confesses. "But it's still a lot of fun. What's great about that is that it's a little bit more cheesy in some ways. You really have to get everyone to

work at their top level, work at their best, and spontaneously come up with stuff.

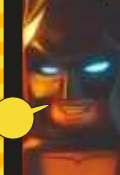
"It feels a little bit like you're in a garage band putting songs together so you can go out and play them tonight," he continues. "A lot of fun, spontaneous energy comes out of that, and everyone feeds off that, and I think it makes the movie better. It's a fun way to work, anyway."

At the start of the production process, McKay had been working simultaneously on *The Lego Movie 2* and *The Lego Batman Movie* with the former's directing duo Christopher Miller and Phil Lord, and writer Seth Grahame-Smith. As they were developing both of those films ➔



Batman has a huge task on his hands: becoming a father.

034 | SciFiNow



PRESENTING BATMAN AS SUCH A RIDICULOUS CHARACTER – WHICH TOTALLY WORKED IN THE LEGO MOVIE – GIVES HIS SOLO FILM A LOT OF

opportunities to poke fun at him. But as it's partly for fans of the character, it was important to McKay to not only emphasise his weirder traits, but also celebrate what's awesome about him.

"That's what's great about this opportunity," he says. "Clearly the premise of Batman is ridiculous, a guy who decides to take it upon himself to fight crime, learn karate and wear a ridiculous outfit... If you were to meet that person, you'd think they were insane, and clearly also incredibly full of themselves that they think that they could solve this very complicated problem entirely by themselves, and put themselves out there like that."

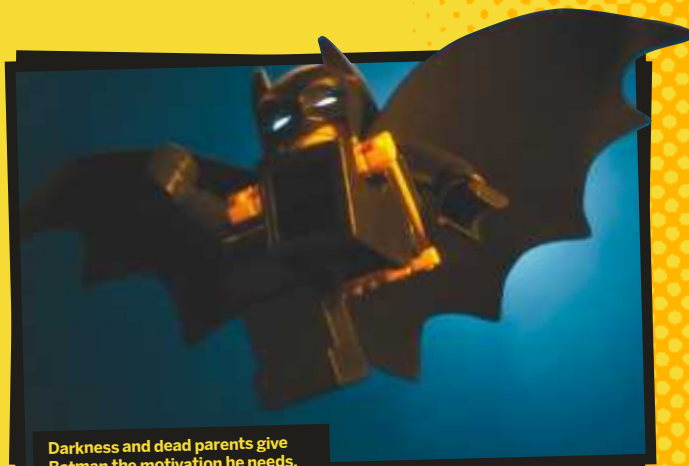
"But being able to celebrate what's great about Batman, the self-sacrifice and heroism that comes naturally with him, and to be able to deconstruct, take apart or critique Batman, that's awesome! To be able to do that in one movie, it's constantly flipping tone, because you can do that. You can do that with *The Lego Movie* when you're dealing with stuff

that's toys. You can look at it from a more critical perspective and have fun with it. I think that's the main thing: we're having fun. We're having fun when we're critiquing Batman, and we're having fun when we're just being a Batman movie or just being a comedy with Batman in it."

McKay believes the same is true of any Batman iteration, whether it's the campy Adam West version or the dark and solemn Christopher Nolan. "In both contexts, they're kind of taking themselves seriously. That's what's the joke in the Adam West one; they're both taking themselves so seriously that it becomes kind of ridiculous. The way Adam West and Burt Ward portray Batman and Robin is they play it like they're *Star Trek*; like they're William Shatner. No one's winking; they play everything really serious, and that's where the comedy comes from, because it's so ridiculous and colourful and silly."

As well as paying tribute to what's great about Batman, *The Lego Batman Movie* will also be pulling out the big guns when it comes to making references to the larger Batman universe. McKay's goal was to try and fit in as many as was humanly possible, from the comic books and animated series to the vast number of other Batman films.

"I just kept going until someone eventually said, 'We can only make this many, or we can only get the rights to this many, or we can't do this character because it will scare children!'" McKay confesses. "If we didn't get a character, there's something in the signage of Gotham city, or a reference in a newspaper

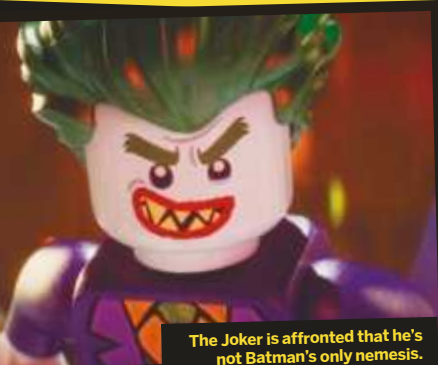
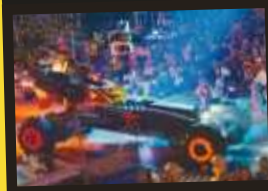


Darkness and dead parents give Batman the motivation he needs.

headline... There are little Easter eggs, some very overt. It's definitely a deep dive if you love movies, love comics and love Batman."

There are also references to other, non-Batman-related films scattered throughout. Closing off our interview, McKay adds, "That's what's fun about doing a *Lego* movie, especially a *Lego Batman* movie. Just by having these characters say lines that you'd have in a Michael Bay movie, they become ridiculous coming out of a toy's mouth. We literally took lines from a Michael Bay movie and put them in *Lego* characters' mouths, and it's funny to watch them act like they're in a big Cuban Missile Crisis."

The Lego Batman Movie will be released in cinemas on 9 February.



The Joker is affronted that he's not Batman's only nemesis.



Jenny Slate joins Mr J as Harley Quinn.

BUILD-A-SUPER HERO

Everything you possibly need to become a Master Builder of heroes

WOLVERINE'S HEAD

Don't let things like paint and plastic let mutton chops go to waste.

SUPERMAN'S HAIR

The only thing stiffer than Superman's hair is his intolerance to villainy.

HULK'S TORSO

Does *Lego* Hulk hurt more when you step on him or when he steps on you?

BATMAN'S CAPE

Bruce Wayne's alter ego isn't called the Caped Crusader for nothing.

THE AVENGERS' SHAWARMA

A superhero is nothing without a balanced and protein-rich diet.

MACE WINDU'S LIGHTSABER

If you're going to wield a *Lego* lightsaber then it might as well be purple.

ROBIN'S LEGS

There are no finer pins on Earth than the legs of *Lego* Dick Grayson.





MUST-SEE TV

The Santa Clarita Diet



6 REASONS WHY YOU'VE SANTA CLARITA

THE SANTA CLARITA DIET

6 Reasons Why You Need The Santa Clarita Diet



TIMOTHY OLYPHANT TELLS US WHY WE'VE GOT AN APPETITE FOR NETFLIX'S HORROR COMEDY SERIES

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

WE ALL LOVE DIRTY LITTLE SUBURBAN SECRETS, AND SANTA CLARITA DIET HAS A DOOZY. THE NEW NETFLIX HORROR COMEDY SERIES STARS DREW BARRYMORE AND TIMOTHY OLYPHANT as

Sheila and Joel, a California couple whose cosy but slightly dull existence as husband and wife realtors explodes when something rather unusual happens.

Suddenly, Sheila doesn't have a heartbeat, she's feeling a lot more impulsive, and she's got some rather unusual appetites. Can they juggle their work and home life responsibilities, guide their teenage daughter Abby (Liv Hewson) through this blood-soaked crisis and figure out a way to feed Sheila?

"I thought it was ridiculously entertaining," enthuses Olyphant. "I loved that it felt unexpectedly original and different, and yet familiar."

IT'S GOT GOOD PEDIGREE

The show comes from Victor Fresco, beloved by fans of cult comedy for creating brilliant (if tragically short-lived) shows like *Better Off Ted* and *Andy Richter Controls The Universe*. "Victor had a whole vision for it before I got involved, and everybody that's ever worked with him has nothing but great things to say about him," Olyphant tells us. The star of *Deadwood* has an executive producer credit on the series, but he tells us that Fresco knew exactly what he was doing. "My executive producer responsibilities were just a lot of cheerleading," he explains. "It was lovely. As much as I love to be involved and I love to get in the kitchen, it was nice to know that if I just showed up and hit my mark and said the things he wrote down, we'd be okay!"

THE CAST IS EXCELLENT

The idea of Timothy Olyphant and Drew Barrymore as a domestic comedy pairing may seem unusual, but they've got an offbeat chemistry that works really well and the excellent ensemble includes Mary Elizabeth Ellis (*It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*), Skyler Gisondo (*Vacation*), Richard T Jones (*American Horror Story*), some incredible guest stars that we won't spoil here, and a superb break-out turn from Hewson as Abby.

"There was nothing about this show that I didn't enjoy, and that would especially include working with those actors," enthuses Olyphant. "Drew is a gem; she's one of a kind, and a very authentic personality. She's just so willing to put herself out there and embarrass herself, it's fun to be around. Liv was such a fun discovery, Skyler is unbelievably funny. It was just a blast, everybody."

IT'S GOT SOME PRETTY FULL-ON GORE...

Looking at these pictures from the show, you might be wondering why it's being covered in **SciFiNow**.

Well, once things kick off, it gets pretty bloody pretty bloody fast. Killing and eating people is not a clean business, and getting rid of the body? That's a whole other level of ick. "Whenever we had those gags, I remember saying to Victor, 'Now we got a show,'" Olyphant remembers. "Now we got a show! I think it's the combination of that of almost traditional sitcom tone in combination with, 'I think that woman's in the bathroom eating a person!' That's the thing I find so refreshing about the show! Good times, man! Good times."

...BUT IT IS ALSO A FAMILY DRAMA

As gruesome and outrageous as things get, *Santa Clarita Diet* never loses sight of the family at its core. Joel, Sheila and Abby are trying to get by while they figure out just what exactly is going on with Mom, so in between the dead bodies there are actually some pretty tender and well-observed scenes of family bonding and domestic conflict resolution.

"The show is a traditional sitcom about a marriage in the best way possible, as grounded as possible, and every now and then someone might get killed!" laughs Olyphant. "But we're trying to make the marriage work, you know? It's about a guy who's just trying to make his marriage work [and] keep the family together." Some of that involves pretty frank discussions about how they're going to go about feeding Sheila, with ever-increasing levels of hysteria. "It's a bizarre little pleasure, isn't it?" says Olyphant. "Watching them figure out how they're going to do it or where to keep the body, it feels like this bizarre, funny, dirty secret."

IT'S HIGHLY ADDICTIVE

We're all used to bingeing Netflix shows now: find out when a series is dropping, clear that weekend, and just settle in. But believe us when we say that this is incredibly watchable, as the stakes creep higher and higher and the family's various crises begin to reach critical mass. "The more things to just started to stack up against him, the more fun it was to play," Olyphant tells us. "I feel like that's when the show really starts firing on all cylinders, when he's just barely got his head above water. That's, to me when it gets really fun."

Of course, being on Netflix allows the show to go pretty big on things like gore and cussin'. "Netflix is an amazing place to work," Olyphant. "They really are in the best possible way, like the most wonderful neglectful parents. They give you a bunch of money and they say, 'Go have fun, and we're checking in every now and then, but we really like what you're doing, and we just want to encourage you to go for it,' and I'm just very appreciative of that experience."

IT'S GOT DREW BARRYMORE TRYING SOMETHING PRETTY DIFFERENT

This final point is one of the most convincing, but we'll let Olyphant tell you about it. "Yeah, when Drew agreed to do the show we were just like, 'Oh, God, we're good,'" he laughs. "Watching her eat people is going to be so much fun!" ☞

Santa Clarita Diet will be available on Netflix from 3 February.

ED THE DIET

SUPERHERO TV IS ABOUT TO ENTER A NEW ERA: THE AGE OF LEGION. WE TALK TO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOHN CAMERON ABOUT MUTANTS, MENTAL HEALTH AND MORE... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

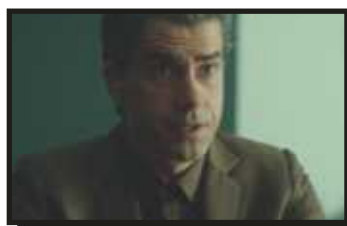
PATIENT X

THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS TO GET EXCITED ABOUT *LEGION*, THE FIRST AND FOREMOST (IN OUR BOOK, AT LEAST) BEING THE FACT THAT THE FANTASTIC

Noah Hawley has been acting as both a writer and a showrunner for the series. Hawley more than impressed in 2014 with *Fargo*, the Minnesota-set crime series based on the Coen Brothers film of the same name, and he only went and solidified our faith in him further the following year with a second season that was just as brilliant.

Hawley's above-average consistency all but ensures that *Legion* is going to be a blast, and the show's executive producer John Cameron couldn't agree more. "He's a genius, for one thing," he says of Hawley. Before joining *Legion*, Cameron already had firsthand experience of said genius, having worked as an executive producer on *Fargo*.

"Starting there is always a great place to leap from," Cameron continues. "He's a genre fan; he grew up with the comics, the *X-Men* comics and the Marvel universe. He's a big proponent of reinventing genre in the sense of taking concepts that may or may not have been seen a lot in finding a new way in or a new aspect of them to discover, so I think that's what we'll find with *Legion*. It's what he did with *Fargo*, taking off from where Joel and Ethan [Coen] left the film. He stayed in that *Fargo* mindset and universe, but crafted an entirely new story each year. That's what *Legion*'s about: it's a reinvention of genre."



As the series progresses, David's powers continue to grow.

"IT'S KIND OF A TIGHTROPE WALK BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT"
JOHN CAMERON

One look at the trailer makes it clear that *Legion* is in a whole different world to the likes of *Agents Of SHIELD*, *Agent Carter*, and even the Netflix Marvel universe. We would say that was down to it being made by a branch of the Fox Entertainment Group, but from the tiny snippets we've seen, it also feels completely

new when put side by side with the Fox-produced *X-Men* movies.

Legion technically does take place in the *X-Men* universe, Cameron explains, but in a very particular Noah Hawley version of that universe. "In other words, it's not exactly the movie universe that we're used to from the *X-Men* world, but of course it's a very expansive concept, so this is a Noah-created corner of that universe, if you will, that has to do with a protagonist, David, who has been diagnosed through his entire life with mental illness. He comes to learn that perhaps it's not mental illness; it's special abilities, mutant abilities that we're familiar with from the *X-Men* universe. It's an investigation and a discovery on his part of is he truly ill, or is he truly endowed with extraordinary power?"

As well as challenging the current superhero film and TV climate – which

has been extremely action-heavy as of late – in terms of theme and story, *Legion* is set to turn the visual aspect of the genre on its head.

"That's the intent," says Cameron. "It's a multi-layered piece; we deal with reality and dreams and alternate universes, so the kind of overlapping of all those concepts lends itself to an incredibly interesting visual approach. I have to say I don't think it's like anything on television at the moment that I've seen, and it will be really interesting to see how people respond."

LEGION REALLY HAS GOT A GREAT GROUP TOGETHER; ITS LEADING MAN, DAN STEVENS, LEFT THE QUIANT AND PROPER WORLD OF DOWNTOWN ABBEY BEHIND

a while ago, and seems to be picking his parts carefully. After his brilliant turn as David in Adam Wingard's 2014 film *The Guest*, we're rather hoping that Stevens is aiming to shape himself into a future genre icon.

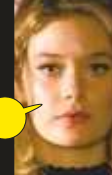
"Dan Stevens is fantastic," says Cameron. "He's a competent actor, and this is a very difficult, multifaceted role that requires him to juggle painful reality, hurt, anger, depression and sadness with a kind of lightness. There's humour to the show, and it's kind of a tightrope walk between darkness and light, and Dan is extraordinarily nimble as an artist."

To the casting directors, it was clear from early on that Stevens was a perfect fit for the show. "He's a scintillating personality, he's a lovely guy and he's all-in, 110 per cent on this concept and this idea," Cameron continues. "He rose to the floor, so to speak, with his abilities and his natural affinity to the role. I think he's just a perfect fit."

Mutant David Haller, also known as Legion, ought to give Stevens something to sink his teeth into. With more and more drama shows providing character studies as a basis for each season, like Frank Underwood in *House Of Cards* and Elliot Alderson in *Mr Robot*, *Legion* will have to pull out all



David Haller's look from the comics has changed a fair bit.



FLEW OFF TO
KILL DANI
MOONSTAR
BUT WAS
TRANSPORTED
TO THE
AGE OF
APOCALYPSE
TIMELINE,
CAUGHT AND
MADE A SLAVE

REACHING THE
FULL EXTENT
OF HIS POWERS,
DAVID ERASED
HIMSELF FROM
EXISTENCE

TRAVELLED BACK IN
TIME TO KILL MAGENTO;
REVEALED THE
EXISTENCE OF
MUTANTS TO THE
WORLD BEFORE
ACCIDENTALLY KILLING
XAVIER
INSTEAD!

THE SON OF MUTANT
CHARLES XAVIER
AND HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR
GABRIELLE
HALLER

CAUSED MUTANT
BISHOP TO KILL
HIMSELF WHILE
TRYING TO SHOW
DAVID THE FUTURE
HE HAD CAUSED,
WHICH INCLUDED
ACCIDENTALLY
STOPPING HIS OWN
CONCEPTION

FOUND ALIVE
BUT TRAPPED
INSIDE A
CONCRETE BOX
SOME TIME
LATER

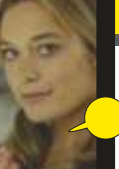
WHO IS DAVID HALLER?

Or a better question would be: what did David Haller do now? Here's what we know about the comics version of the Omega-level mutant, also known as Legion. Intentionally or not, he's constantly messing shit up...

BECAME THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF A
TERRORIST ATTACK WHEN HE WAS VERY
YOUNG, WITH TRAUMA CAUSING HIS MUTANT
POWERS TO MANIFEST. THE POWERS LED
TO THE INCINERATION OF THE MINDS OF
THE TERRORISTS AND THE ABSORPTION OF
THE LEADER'S MIND INTO DAVID'S. DAVID
WAS RENDERED TEMPORARILY CATATONIC
AND REMAINED IN THE CARE OF MOIRA
MACTAGGERT ON MUIR ISLAND

THE EVIL PERSONAS
OVER TOOK DAVID'S BODY
AND STARTED HAVING
WALL-TO-WALL BEFORE
FINALLY BEING
SUBQUED

WAS GIVEN A NEURAL SWITCHBOARD WRISTBAND, WHICH CAUSED
SOME OF HIS PERSONAS TO ESCAPE WITH CORPORAL BODIES
WHILE HUNTING THEM DOWN AND REABSORBING THEM, DAVID
ACCIDENTALLY ABSORBED ROGUE



MUST-SEE TV

Legion

➤ the stops to present a protagonist that people will remember.

"Obviously, every character is unique, with their own unique back story, struggles and concerns," says Cameron, "and David is coming to terms with potentially the fact that he's mentally ill, or potentially the fact that he has these extraordinary powers. What we discover, I think, is quite possibly both. He is mentally ill and he has extraordinary powers, so that, I think, is a unique situation for David."

Though mental health issues are a big part of David's character in both the series and the comics, Cameron says that subject matter won't have too much of an impact of the season's main story. "The mental institution and the mental health angle, we try to be respectful of the fact that in certain cases we're dealing with real-world issues that are difficult and painful, obviously. But this is at its heart entertainment, and so our institution is unlike any that's been portrayed on TV before, and there is a surprise in store with regards to the nature of the institution David inhabits."

The psychiatric hospital where we meet David is the temporary home to a number of other patients that we'll no

doubt come to know and love. While incarcerated, David will embark on his journey of figuring out what the heck is up with him with the assistance of some of those patients, including Syd Barrett, an original character named after Roger 'Syd' Barrett of Pink Floyd – whose music was a major influence on Hawley's work on the series – and played by Rachel Keller.

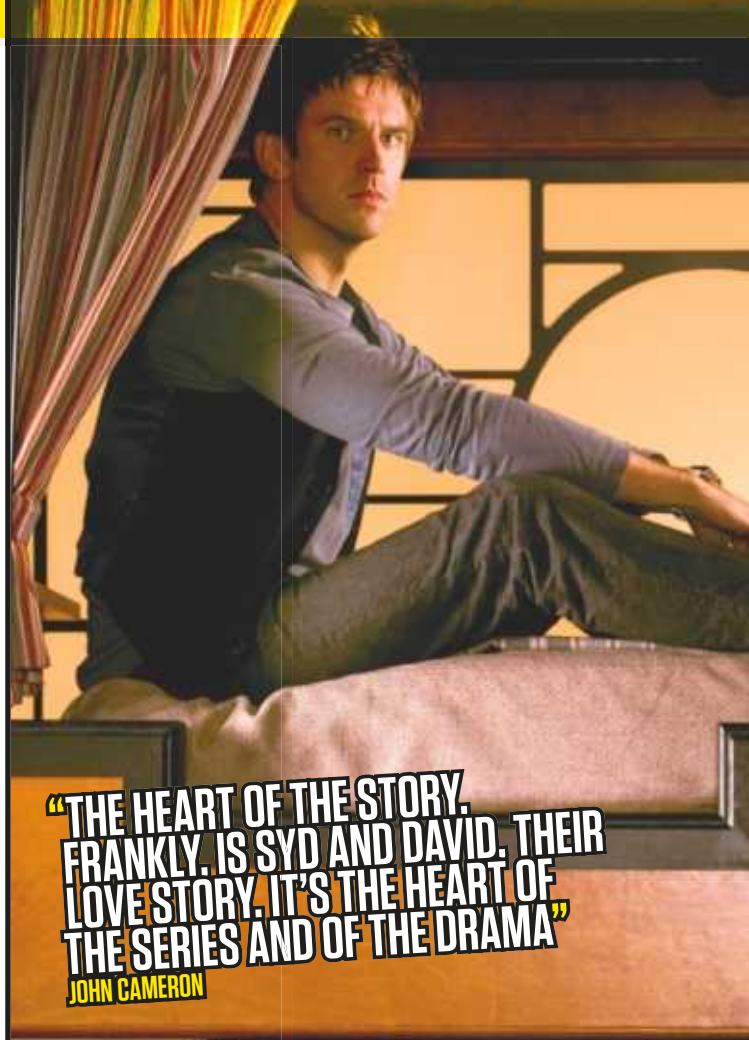
"She's got her own interesting power that is also kind of a disability for her," says Cameron. "In other words, it keeps her isolated and cut off from humanity in a certain way. She and David form a bond quite quickly, and a romance develops. The heart of the story, frankly, is Syd and David, their love story. It's the heart of the series and of the drama, which also I believe sets it apart and is unique in this world."

WHILE SEARCHING FOR THEIR IDEAL SYD, THE CREW HAD A COUPLE OF PARTICULAR PERSONALITY TRAITS IN MIND: THEY WANTED SOMEONE

with an openness, a freshness and a genuine, heartfelt emotion that wasn't hidden or covered over. Keller, who worked with both Cameron and Hawley previously as Simone Gerhardt in *Fargo* Season Two, more than qualified.

"Rachel is a lovely young lady with a big, open heart," says Cameron. "She's happy and optimistic, and just fit the bill for Syd, totally... We knew her range and her abilities, and I think Noah thought she was just perfect for the role."

A result of this central romantic storyline is that it pulls *Legion* out of the deep, somewhat murky ocean of



"THE HEART OF THE STORY. FRANKLY, IS SYD AND DAVID. THEIR LOVE STORY. IT'S THE HEART OF THE SERIES AND OF THE DRAMA"
JOHN CAMERON

It's unclear as to whether we'll meet other characters from the *X-Men* universe.



To what extent is this all really happening? Noah Hawley will likely keep us guessing.

THE SON OF MUTANT
XAVIER



When we catch up with David, he's in a psychiatric institution.

DAVID ERASED HIMSELF FROM EXISTENCE



science fiction and places it into the easily accessible rock pools of drama and romance. It's a show suited both for lifelong fans of sci-fi and the X-Men, and for people who think 'Magneto' is a type of choc-ice.

"It's a love story at its heart; an investigation of David and Syd's relationship," Cameron tells us. "I think we'll get the fan audience because it's cool, and I think they'll stick with us because it's cool. But I think it's more broadly appealing in the sense that it's a human drama with darkness and light, and love and hate. It's got it all."

Likewise, *Legion* is taking liberties when it comes to staying true to the comics. The first season, which consists of an eight-episode arc, takes inspiration from the source material but, to keep it fresh, Cameron says it's very much its own thing. "It's kind of particular and unique in its own Hawley-created universe, and his approach to the subject. While it is *Legion*, the character from the comics, it's an alternate take on that character. I'd say it's not definitively close, but it's recognisable."

There's more than enough X-Men knowledge to go around, however. This is the stuff that most of the crew grew up loving. "Looking backwards, I'm a big fan of the films," Cameron reveals. "I think they really are some of the best of the superhero genre. Obviously the Marvel Cinematic Universe is unbelievably cool. I collected comics growing up. I was more of a DC kid, so Batman, Superman, that side of it, but I was familiar with X-Men and the whole Marvel universe, so this is fantastic for me on a personal level, only because

I've been a genre fan from when I was about eight years old."

A problem with fans of the source material running adaptation shows is that the result can start to feel a bit samey; they want to let the original inform the new, but that approach can sometimes lead to the audience experiencing déjà vu. Happily, Cameron doesn't think that's the case with *X-Men*; Hawley's mind is too original for that. "I think [*Legion*] is a completely new look," he says. "I feel like it's an alternate take on the *X-Men* universe."

David Haller's early background (pre-birth, in fact) is worth making a note of: his mutant powers occurred as a result of being Charles Xavier's son. Seeing as Xavier is one of the *X-Men* universe's best-known characters, it would make sense to bring him into all this somehow, even if it was just as an Easter Egg or passing comment. Obviously, we ask Cameron if that little detail is going to have any bearing on the series.

"What? Are you asking if we'll see Professor X in the show?" he laughs. "I have no idea, to tell you the truth! That's all in the mind of Noah Hawley." ☞

Legion premieres on FOX on 9 February.



Rachel Keller as fellow patient 'Syd' Barrett.

NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOWRUNNER BUSINESS

Non-genre TV masterminds that we desperately want to see run a genre show



RACHEL BLOOM AND ALINE BROSH MCKENNA
KNOWN FOR: *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*

WHY THEY'D BE GREAT: Pitch-perfect series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* balances comedy, drama and surreal but brilliant musical numbers like it's nobody's business. Were they to run a genre show, Bloom and McKenna would give us characters to root for alongside dragons, magic and something to hum under our breath for weeks.



SHONDA RHIMES
KNOWN FOR: *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*, *Scandal*

WHY SHE'D BE GREAT: If there's one thing that's missing from most genre shows, it's an intense emphasis on complicated, sensual relationships between co-workers. The likes of *Game Of Thrones* and *American Horror Story* just don't do it like ShondaLand. The *Scandal* boss would give us something to cry over, but in the best way.



DAVID SIMON
KNOWN FOR: *The Wire*, *Show Me A Hero*

WHY HE'D BE GREAT: Simon is all about grit and keeping it real, as demonstrated by the masterpiece that is the decidedly non-genre – and widely accepted as one of the best TV shows in recent history – *The Wire*. Merging its bleak genius with a science fiction story just makes us think of crimes and cops in space, which we're sure would be amazing.



VINCE GILLIGAN
KNOWN FOR: *Breaking Bad*, *Better Call Saul*

WHY HE'D BE GREAT: Technically he worked on *The X-Files* (as, arguably, one of the best writers), but Gilligan really shone when he was running that little show about meth that won a whole load of awards over its five-season run and became the talk of the water cooler in most offices. Imagine conventions of sci-fi combined with the plot twists and character arcs of *Breaking Bad*.



The Secret History of America

SLEEPY HOLLOW IS RETURNING FOR A FOURTH SEASON – MINUS ONE FAMILIAR FACE. STAR TOM MISON AND THE CAST AND CREW DISCUSS LIFE AFTER ABBIE...

WORDS JOE NAZZARO

FOR SLEEPY HOLLOW FANS, IT LOOKED AS THOUGH SEASON THREE MIGHT BE FAREWELL FOR THE POPULAR SUPERNATURAL ACTION-ADVENTURE series. With the unexpected death of Abbie Mills (after actress Nicole Beharie made the decision to move on) in finale 'Ragnarok', there was some question of whether things would move forward, or if fans would accept a series minus the long-standing relationship between Abbie and Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison).

The latter question will eventually be answered when *Sleepy Hollow* returns for a fourth season in early 2017 with new characters (and a few old ones), a new setting and a lot of changes. "The new season starts after a very short period of time," explains Mison, "Because we're not doing another time leap between seasons. Ichabod and Jenny go off in different directions, because there are two missions now: a mission to find the new witness, and the mission to find the secret organisation that Washington has set up. While Jenny goes off to find out whatever she can about the new witness, Ichabod is trying to find that group.

"The arc of the season is about trying to find a new witness," continues Lyndie Greenwood, who plays Jenny Mills, "But Abbie's absence is palpable throughout. Her legacy is the driving force behind all of the actions anyone takes."

Season Four relocates Ichabod to Washington DC, where he discovers the hidden archives alluded to at the end of Season Three that reveal the 'secret history of America', which are overseen by Jake Wells (Jerry MacKinnon) and Alex Norwood (Rachel Melvin). He gets partnered with ex-marine-turned-Department of Homeland Security agent Diana Thomas (Janina Gavankar), who recently lost her own partner. "These are two characters with a gap in their lives that needs to be filled," Mison elaborates. "Whether or not either of them would admit it, but they do fall into step with each other."

"If you're fans of the show," adds Gavankar, "You know what Ichabod and George Washington were fighting for, and what they were trying to build at the dawn of America. The District of Columbia really embodied that, so it's a great place to mine all of that history. There are endless ways to mirror our current times with what they were fighting for."

Another new arrival is real-life historical figure Benjamin Banneker. "He's a really satisfying addition," says co-showrunner Albert Kim. "He was a freeborn black man during the American Revolution, who was an accomplished engineer and astronomer, and was responsible for laying the groundwork for DC, so that immediately fit into lots of different storylines we were doing. It was also a great way to get into what the Revolution meant to different people,

so he became a character that we sank our teeth into right away."

On the villain side, there are hints that viewers may be seeing John Noble's Henry Parrish again (glimpsed in a sizzle reel back in October at NYCC), but the season's big bad will likely be Malcolm Dreyfuss. "My character is not written as a two-dimensional, throwaway, plot-serving villain," hints actor Jeremy Davies, "and I think that's something rare."

"In past seasons, there has been more inclination towards monsters, but it's fair to say this gentleman is the most diabolically monstrous of all, in that he's a man to begin with and not a monster. And one other key distinction I think I'm allowed to say, which is not too wildly spoilery, is in past seasons, the villains have certainly been formidable, but have been defeated, but my character may very well not be!"

The series will continue to introduce a wealth of real-life historical figures, albeit with a twist. "Mary Todd Lincoln fought demons," notes Mison, "Who knew?"

"The great thing about this show is it offers the potential to mine so much of history and mythology and legend," claims Kim, "and we haven't even come close to tapping all of that. One of the things we're doing this year that I've really excited about is we've moved past the period of the American Revolution, so figures from American history beyond the 18th century will now become part of the show. In terms of monsters and creatures, we tap into all sorts of different mythologies, whether it's the Bible or American lore, or from Wiccans to Germanic legends to Egyptians."



There are new challenges for the cast of *Sleepy Hollow* in Season Four.

SLEEPY HOLLOW

The Secret History Of America



In Nicole Beharie's absence, Lyndie Greenwood will step up.

While *Sleepy Hollow* may be a different series without Beharie, her loss appears to have created many new avenues to pursue. "We know fans will have a reaction," confirms executive producer and co-showrunner Clifton Campbell. "But we feel very satisfied with the answers we've provided, including some I think no one will see coming. They're not easy to take root, given the bond and the unique nature of the original partnership between witnesses, but we feel we've got a good direction for the show in terms of the way we're moving forward."

"The tricky part is trying to honour and respect everything we've done," adds Kim, "but at the same time push forward and start in new directions. It's a fine line. We're trying to find that balance, but I think we've done it, and we're really looking forward to seeing where all of this takes us!"



Sleepy Hollow Season Four will air on the Universal Channel later in 2017.

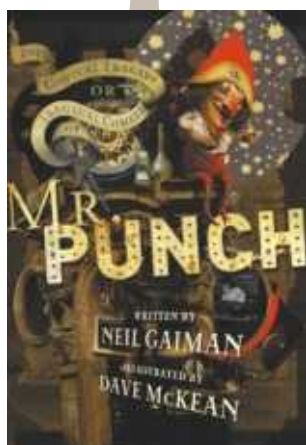
THERE ARE TWO MISSIONS: TO FIND THE NEW WITNESS, AND TO FIND THE SECRET ORGANISATION THAT WASHINGTON HAS SET UP

TOM MISON

THE LIBRARY OF THE DREAM KING

WORDS
JONATHAN
HATFULL

WITH AMERICAN
GODS JUST A FEW
MONTHS AWAY, WE TAKE
A LOOK BACK AT NEIL
GAIMAN'S INCREDIBLE
CAREER SO FAR...



EARLY WORKS AND DAVE MCKEAN

KEY WORKS: *Violent Cases* (1987), *Signal To Noise* (1989), *The Tragical Comedy Or Comical Tragedy Of Mr Punch* (1994)

Gaiman has worked with a lot of truly great artists, but the most significant collaborator (and the author's avowed favourite) is Dave McKean. Their collaborations, especially in these standalone graphic novels, show the perfect match of writer and illustrator. These frequently disturbing and gleefully unreliable tales explore themes of memory, dreams and consciousness, from the hazy recollections in *Violent Cases* to the buried and potentially horrifying family secrets of *Mr Punch*. Their first commission for DC was a three-issue take on *Black Orchid*, and it's a mission statement for both; with Gaiman's love character mythology and world-building, and McKean pushing at the boundaries of visual storytelling. It's amazing to look at these early works and see the ideas and techniques that would evolve and explode into later work ringing through so clearly.

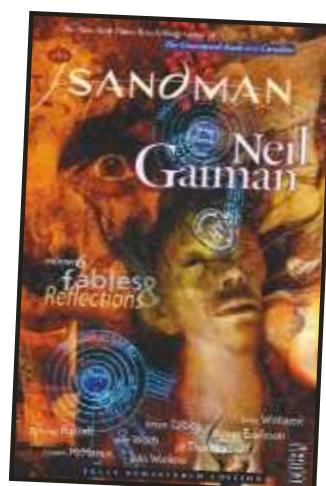
GO FURTHER: *The Wolves In The Walls*, *The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish*

THE SANDMAN

DC/VERTIGO 1989-96, 2015-16

Following the success of *Black Orchid*, Gaiman pitched Karen Berger a revival of another neglected DC character: The Sandman. The result is one of the truly great works of the medium, a soaring 75-issue (not including the recent *Overture*) series that began as a horror comic before developing into so much more. *The Sandman* dove into ancient myths and legends from around the world while slowly crafting an intricate and moving central story. We watch the faerie court attend the first performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see what happens when the Devil quits Hell, and we fear for a teenage girl stranded at a serial killer convention. At the heart of all of this is Dream, on a journey towards a cataclysmic event.

GO FURTHER: Additional volumes include *Dream Hunters*, *Endless Nights* and the recent *Overture*, and there have been spin-offs for *Lucifer*, *The Furies* and *The Dead Boy Detectives*.



THE
ENDLESS

DESTINY

The eldest and most reserved. He is blind, but sees everything, and is chained to a book containing the story of existence.

DEATH

Cheery, kind, and often the siblings' peacemaker. Goes to Earth once a year as a mortal.

DEATH

DC/VERTIGO *The High Cost Of Living* (1993), *The Time Of Your Life* (1996)

The kindest of the Endless has had two excellent solo outings, and she has gone on to pop up in various other series, including Gaiman's own *The Books Of Magic*. She also presented a one-shot *Hellblazer* comic in 1994 titled *Death Talks About Life*, in which she spoke about HIV and AIDS, dispelling myths and giving readers important information. This optimistic Goth girl with unruly black hair, a big smile, incredible wisdom and an Ankh necklace is one of Gaiman's most iconic creations, and one of our favourites.

THE BOOKS OF MAGIC DC/VERTIGO (1990)

Often compared to *Harry Potter*, this four-issue miniseries (later expanded) tells the story of a bespectacled teenager who is told that he could become an incredibly powerful magician, with guest appearances from the likes of Phantom Stranger and John Constantine, and different artists working on each of the four issues.

"You lived
what anybody
gets, Bernie.
You got a
lifetime. No
more. No less"

MARVEL 1602 (2003)



Marvel's greatest superheroes have arrived too early in time, at the end of Elizabeth's reign, and are hunted by those who believe they bring the end of the world.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE CAPED CRUSADER? (2009)



After Grant Morrison killed Batman, Gaiman and Andy Kubert gave him a fond farewell with a wake held by those who knew him best, as Bruce must say goodbye to life.

FUTURE SHOCKS (1986-87)



Gaiman's earliest comic work was found in the pages of 2000AD with four stories for *Future Shocks*. However, his time there was relatively short-lived.

GOOD OMENS (1990)

Gaiman's friendship with the late, great Sir Terry Pratchett led to their collaboration on this much-loved novel, which features a lot of confusion surrounding two potential antichrists, the oncoming end of the world, and witch prophet Agnes Nutter. Pratchett did most of the physical writing, but the combination of their sensibilities works perfectly. A six-part TV series is currently in the works.

GO FURTHER: Gaiman co-authored the Interworld trilogy with Michael and Mallory Reaves



DREAM

Moody, brooding and very serious about his job. However, he is not unkind.

DESPAIR

Naked, obese and self-mutilating, Despair always sees the worst in any situation, although she loves Destruction.

DESIRE

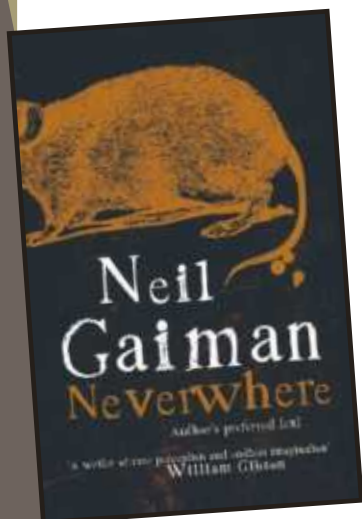
Frequently cruel, and not a fan of Dream. The androgynous Desire can make you want anything.

DESTRUCTION

Strapping, popular and enthusiastic, but abandoned his role after becoming disillusioned.

DELIRIUM

Delirium was once Delight, before a tragic event caused her to lose her mind. She's a bit unpredictable.



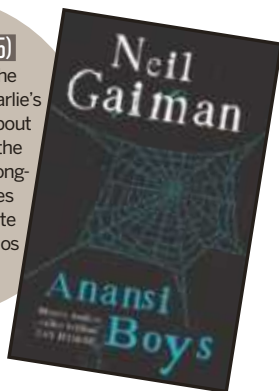
NEVERWHERE (1996)

People just can't seem to stop adapting *Neverwhere*, possibly because that there's a common misconception about which version came first (Gaiman wrote the novel while filming the TV series, which sprang from an idea by Lenny Henry), but also because London Below is such a wonderful place to get lost in. Richard Mayhew helps out a girl in need, and finds himself in a dangerous world underneath London, in which there is an Angel in Islington, Earls and Barons, killers, monsters and more. The show had its flaws (that whole format debacle that made everything look cheap, and the distinctly bovine Beast Of London), but it's quite wonderful too, particularly Paterson Joseph's dashing Marquis de Carabas, Peter Capaldi's two-faced Islington and a real sense of a world brimming with possibilities. The novel fleshed it all out beautifully, and we highly recommend the Radio 4 adaptation of the novel and *How The Marquis Got His Coat Back*.

"Metaphors failed him, then. He had gone beyond the world of metaphor and simile into the place of things that are, and it was changing him"

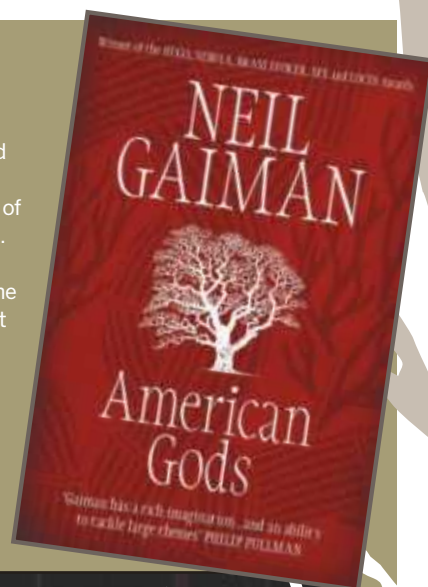
ANANSI BOYS (2005)

Mr Nancy's past is the reason why poor Fat Charlie's life is so miserable and about to become so exciting in the lovely *Anansi Boys*, as his long-lost brother Spider arrives to bring a little of their late father's magic and chaos to his life.



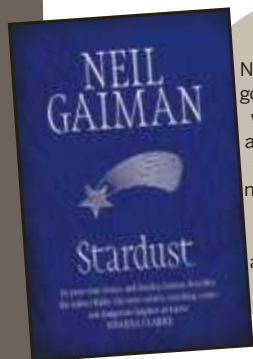
AMERICAN GODS (2001)

If *The Sandman* is Gaiman's masterpiece in comics then *American Gods* remains his towering achievement in the world of prose. It's sprawling and ambitious, and reels in mythologies and religions from around the world, but at its heart, it's the story of lost people struggling to find their place in the world. Once grieving ex-con Shadow Moon agrees to work as a bodyguard for the mysterious Mr Wednesday, he meets a host of weird and wonderful characters, but Gaiman never loses sight of the emotional element. Every sequence with Shadow's recently deceased and even more recently reanimated wife Laura is a pitch-perfect blend of grief, heart, horror and just a dash of dark humour. As epic as *American Gods* is, it's deeply personal. You can also see Shadow's journey continues in short stories 'Monarch Of The Glen' and 'Black Dog'.



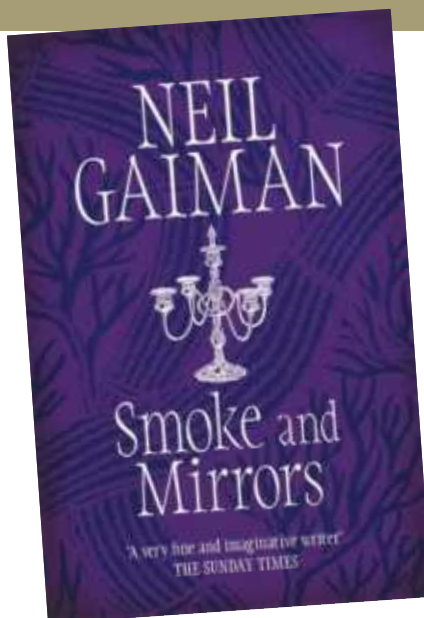
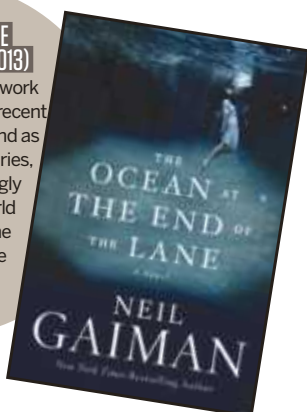
STARDUST (1997)

Naïve young Tristan Thorn goes in search of a fallen star to win the heart of his beloved, and finds it transformed into a woman named Yvaine, who is now being hunted by relentless witches. Charles Vess' illustrations are gorgeous, and we'd recommend the lovely film too.



THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE (2013)

Like much of his earlier work for adults, Gaiman's most recent novel plays with memory, and as in many of his children's stories, its unnamed hero unwittingly entering a dangerous world and needs to make some adult decisions to save his family.



SHORT FICTION

KEY READS: *Smoke & Mirrors* (1998), *Fragile Things* (2006), *Trigger Warning* (2015)

If you're a fan of Gaiman's work and haven't yet dived into his short fiction, we would urge you to not wait another minute. These three collections demonstrate his incredible range, with some truly nightmarish horror, romantic science fiction, and tragic fantasy. Young men give up their flesh to their lovers, a firm offers the possibility of killing the entire human race, girls at a party have travelled across the stars to be there, and Susan ponders her expulsion from Narnia. The stories show his ability to create whole worlds and unforgettable characters with just a few pages, and to deliver a killer ending.



CORALINE (2002)

One of Gaiman's most enduring creations for children, Coraline Jones is bored in her drab new house, with her distracted parents and strange new neighbours, so she is delighted to find a doorway to a magical alternate world where her Other Mother and Other Father are waiting for her, showering her with love and attention. But what's going on with those button eyes? It's a wonderfully creepy tale, and was perfectly adapted by Henry Selick for the glorious Laika film back in 2008.

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK (2008)

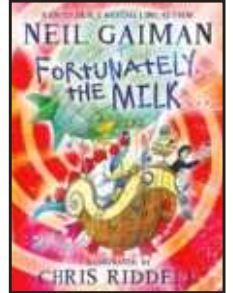
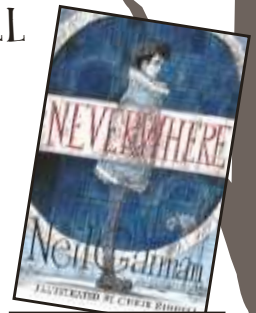
It's easy to see why rumours of a film of *The Graveyard Book* have never gone away. It's an instantly bewitching story, with a young boy growing up in a graveyard, looked after by the various supernatural occupants and hunted by a relentless murderer. There are moments when the story gets very sinister indeed, but for the most part it's a fantastically atmospheric world of genteel vampires, stern werewolves and parental ghosts. There are two versions available, with illustrations by Dave McKean and Chris Riddell.



CHRIS RIDDELL

KEY WORK: *Odd And The Frost Giants* (2008)

The art of Chris Riddell is a perfect fit for Gaiman's work, and we've been treated to a combination of fantastic new fairy tales and beautiful reissues over the last few years. *The Sleeper And The Spindle* gave Snow White a new sense of steely determination, *Odd And The Frost Giants* is a bewitching trip into Norse myths through the eyes of a young loner, and *Fortunately The Milk* is a wonderful tale aimed at young kids filled with a cavalcade of creatures, monsters, and airships.



"What makes Neil Gaiman's writing so special for me is that he has such a clear, clean way of telling incredibly fantastic stories, and there's a simplicity in which he tells very complex ideas that makes them wonderfully relatable while simultaneously maintaining an impassioned sense of the fantastic"

Bryan Fuller



FILM AND TV

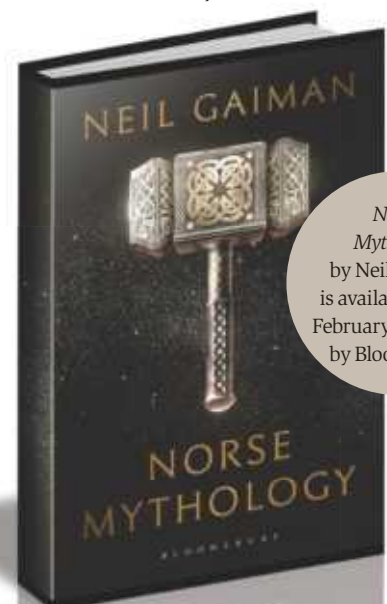
KEY WORK: *Neverwhere*, *Mirrormask*, *Beowulf*, *Doctor Who*

Although Gaiman may not have had time to fit writing an episode of *American Gods* into his busy schedule, his excursions into screenwriting have been frequently wonderful. We loved *Neverwhere*, his take on *Beowulf* (co-written with Roger Avary) gave the story back its blood, guts and bluster (although we're still not sold on the mo-cap), his script for Dave McKean's feature debut *Mirrormask* is an eerie twist on the coming of age story (complete with evil queens, heroic birds and sentient towers), and his 'The Doctor's Wife' episode of *Doctor Who* is one of the finest hours the Time Lord has enjoyed since his revival. Honestly, that episode brings tears to our eyes.



NORSE MYTHOLOGY (2017)

Gaiman's fascination with Norse mythology has been a constant presence in his work, from the gods' appearances in *The Sandman* and *American Gods* to children's books like *Odd And The Frost Giant*. His new book is a retelling of classic Norse mythology tales, with Odin, Thor and Loki's stories presented in the author's inimitable style.



Norse
Mythology
by Neil Gaiman
is available from 7
February, published
by Bloomsbury.



#WTF?!

Gordon Greenleaf: the definition of suck. #LAME
#BOY #CANT #EVEN

Stop! Hammer time.
That's still a thing, right?
#Downwiththekids

Acting in the same film as
my dad? SO embarrassing
#totesawks

KEVIN SMITH

KEVIN SMITH HAS WELL AND TRULY LEFT JAY AND SILENT BOB BEHIND IN FAVOUR OF OUTRAGEOUS HORROR. WITH YOGA HOSERS BEING HIS LATEST EFFORT. WE SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT DIRECTING HIS OWN DAUGHTER, JOHNNY DEPP AND CREATING A CULT HIT IN THE MAKING...



WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER

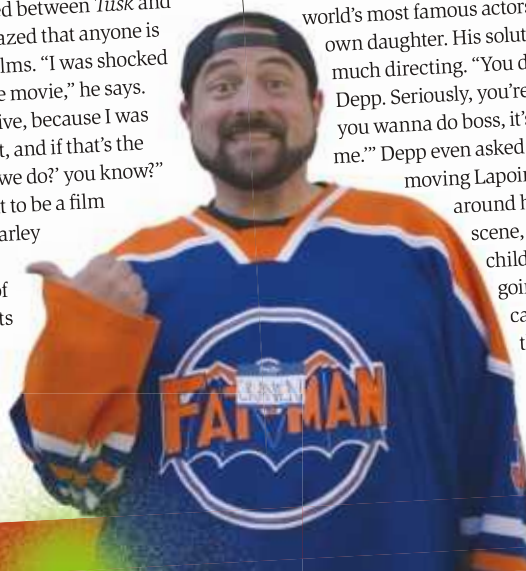
KEVIN SMITH MIGHT BE KNOWN FOR PLAYING SILENT BOB, BUT IN REALITY HE'S MORE OF A JAY. THE DUDE CAN TALK. LUCKILY, WHAT HE SAYS IS VERY FUNNY, SELF-DEPRECATING, INSIGHTFUL AND IMMENSELY

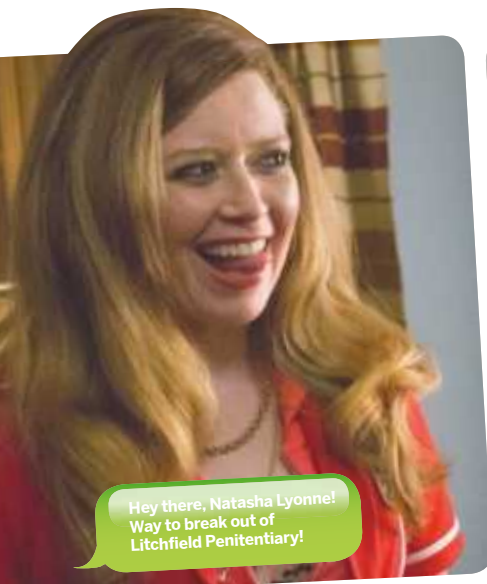
sweary, so our interview was an absolute delight. We met in a slightly sci-fi-looking hotel bar in London to talk about *Yoga Hosers*, the second film in his *True North* trilogy of weird semi-horror movies set in Canada, sandwiched between *Tusk* and *Moose Jaws*. He's still amazed that anyone is letting him make these films. "I was shocked that *Tusk* evolved into the movie," he says. "It changed my perspective, because I was like, 'This shouldn't exist, and if that's the case then what else can we do?' you know?"

'What else' turned out to be a film starring his daughter, Harley Quinn Smith, and Lily-Rose Depp as a couple of teenage yoga enthusiasts who discover an infestation of sentient Nazi bratwursts ('Bratzis', naturally) in the convenience store

they work in. They are helped out in their mission to destroy the Bratzis by investigator Guy Lapointe, played by Johnny Depp, reprising his role from *Tusk*. This, however, is a funnier and less creepy story than that, aimed as it is at young teenage girls.

It was Depp who persuaded him to do a follow-up to *Tusk* (because he loved doing the Lapointe voice), so Smith was faced with two tasks most directors would baulk at: directing one of the world's most famous actors, and directing his own daughter. His solution was to not do much directing. "You don't direct Johnny Depp. Seriously, you're just like, 'Whatever you wanna do boss, it's totally okay with me.'" Depp even asked if he could start moving Lapointe's distinctive mole around his face from scene to scene, which Smith giggles childishly at. "I was never going to be like, 'You can't do that shit with the moles dude; this is a realistic film.' Obviously not. We had Bratzis in it."





Hey there, Natasha Lyonne!
Way to break out of
Litchfield Penitentiary!



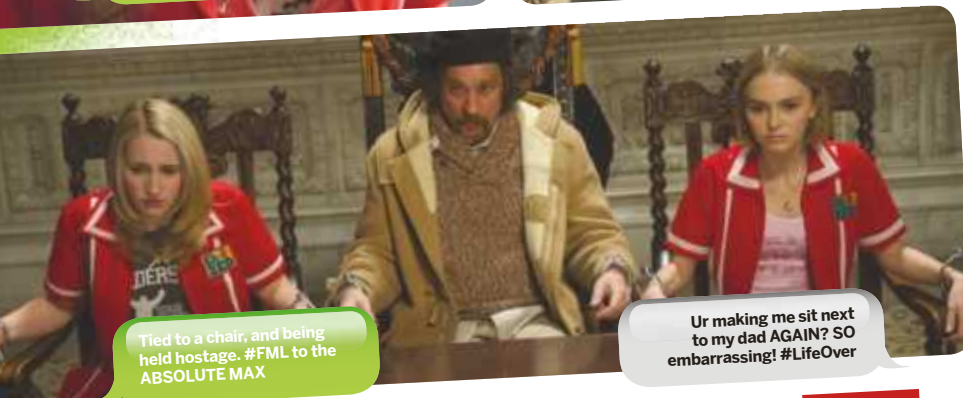
Stan Lee NOT in a
Marvel film? #EpicFail
#EmojiExcellence

OK, Yoga Hosers vs Bratzis.
How r we gonna survive?
#SurvivalGoals



I have a mop. That's how they
do it in the movies, right?

...We r so dead



Tied to a chair, and being
held hostage. #FML to the
ABSOLUTE MAX

Ur making me sit next
to my dad AGAIN? SO
embarrassing! #LifeOver



REBOOTH

As for his daughter (and Depp's daughter, Lily-Rose), that was "really fucking easy, because nobody wants to look cooler than a teenage girl." He would show them their takes, and they would immediately see where they went wrong, "Because nothing I say is going to mean as much as them watching themselves and going, 'I don't look cool here. If I wanna look cool, I'd better do this.'" He also points out that any advice he gave them would be flawed. "I couldn't direct 15-year-old girls on how to be 15-year-old girls – never one myself."

For a guy who loves sci-fi, fantasy and superheroes so much, it's taken him a surprisingly long time to make a pure 'genre' film (we still can't quite decide whether *Dogma* counts). He claims



"I MADE A MIDNIGHT MOVIE FOR AUDIENCES THAT CAN'T STAY AWAKE TO SEE IT, SO THAT'S KINDA STUPID OF ME"
KEVIN SMITH

the reason is that until now, he lacked the talent for it. "Back in the day, I only had the ability to pull off people talking to each other. Now, I can come up with shit that's a little more – I mean, it's rudimentary at best, the action in this movie is straight out of the old *Batman* TV show in terms of how basic it is. But it's only now that I feel confident enough to go and make the shit that I love as opposed to just the shit that I can do."

"It used to be that I was making films because I was saying what was in my head and heart," Smith says. "Now, I'm in that phase where I'm just making up fucking stories... I used to really give a shit what people said about the movies because they were just kind of veiled versions of my life... it was like people going, 'I don't like your life, your friends and stuff.'"

He also raves about one young girl who showed up to a screening. She was the perfect demographic for *Yoga Hosers*, and he asked her what she thought. "The girl goes, 'Yeah, I liked it, the girls were killing

things with sticks!'... She was like, 'It reminded me of me and my friend', and I almost cried because I was like, 'YESSSS!' He expects the film to find its home on a streaming service, "I made a midnight movie for an audience that can't stay awake to see it in theatres, so that's kinda stupid of me," he admits. "*Yoga Hosers* is going to be someone's religion one day," he grins. "That tickles me to fucking death."

Smith describes his *True North* trilogy as "choosing to stray off the path deep into the woods", but once *Moose Jaws* is out he'll be heading back to more recognisable territory. "It looked adventurous and fun," he says, "and I haven't regretted it. But I can see the fucking path up ahead, so sooner or later I'll get back to it, but for now it's just been fucking fun out in the woods for a little while." 🐾

Yoga Hosers will be released on Digital HD on 13 February.





BIG MOVIE

The Great Wall



“NOBODY THOUGHT
ABOUT USING THE
GREAT WALL TO FEND
OFF MONSTERS”

ZHANG YIMOU

THE GREAT BRAWL

WE TALK TO LEGENDARY DIRECTOR ZHANG YIMOU ABOUT BRINGING MONSTERS TO THE GREAT WALL

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

AS HIGH CONCEPTS GO, THEY DON'T COME MUCH MORE EYE-CATCHING THAN 'MONSTERS ARE ATTACKING THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, WHICH, BY THE WAY, WAS BUILT TO STOP THEM'. IT COULD LEAD TO AN

entertaining piece of action cinema, or a colossally dumb misadventure. We've got a good feeling that Legendary's upcoming historical monster movie *The Great Wall* will be the former, and with good reason. In fact, one reason in particular: director Zhang Yimou.

Sure, the cast is very strong (Matt Damon, Willem Dafoe, Andy Lau), there are some impressive names attached to the script (including *Narcos* creators Carlos Bernard and Doug Miro, *Bourne Supremacy* writer Tony Gilroy and *World War Z* author Max Brooks), and we're suckers for epic monster movies, but this isn't yet another example of a studio taking a chance on a Sundance sensation with one indie under his belt; this is Zhang Yimou.

"This project has been in development at Legendary for about seven years, and they've gone through many different directors and scripts," he tells us. "Originally they thought that it might not be a project I would be interested in, because based on all the kind of films I used to make in the past, they didn't quite know if I would want to do a monster movie."

In fairness, Yimou might not be the obvious choice for a monster movie. He's certainly got experience with epic scope and fantasy elements thanks to his incredible wuxia movies *Hero* and *House Of Flying Daggers*, but there has always been a slightly more highbrow element to his films. Looking at the plot for *The Great Wall*, which finds Damon and Pedro Pascal's western mercenaries stumbling across a battle that is waged every 60 years between the Chinese army and a ravenous horde of beasts, you'd be forgiven for thinking it might not jump out at him. However, Yimou



tells us that the script offered a wealth of exciting new opportunities.

"First of all, it was the idea of fighting monsters on the Great Wall," he enthuses. "Nobody has ever thought about using the Great Wall to fend off monsters. The second is the monsters that they fight, it's an ancient monster from Chinese folklore, and it's very famous, but they've never made a film about it. And then having a westerner, an English mercenary, come to China to steal black powder – another Chinese invention – it deals with Chinese culture and having two cultures clash because of that. And then the fourth point that really convinced me is having a secret army on the Great Wall that guards the Wall and fends off monsters."

Drawn by these four elements, Yimou tells us that he saw the opportunity to make something that could both appeal to the multiplex crowd that a budget of this size requires and satisfy his own artistic interests. Having seen some footage from the film, we can confirm that the beautiful colours, sense of scope, attention to detail and strong action sequences that were such a hallmark of his wuxia films are definitely present and correct. ➔



Get ready for some spectacular battles as the monsters attack.

BIG MOVIE

The Great Wall

A WORLD OF MONSTERS

Saluting the strangest creatures from global myths and legends

TAOTIE

The monsters featured in *The Great Wall* can frequently be found on weaponry and antiques, and makes quite an impression to the fact that it swallows people whole. Depictions vary, some more dragon-like than others, and it came to be a warning about gluttony.

THE MONGOLIAN DEATH WORM

This brilliantly named creature was described as two to five feet long, sausage-shaped, with no head or limb, and being incredibly poisonous to the touch. According to some versions it can spit venom and lay eggs in poor camels' intestines. Poor camels.

BUNYIP

This Australian beastie seems to have started as an Aboriginal water spirit, but there are several different variations depending on the location. It's generally described as a mixture of different animal elements, including dogs, crocodiles, ducks, it sometimes has flippers, and it's vicious.

STORSJÖDJURET

Translated as 'The Great Lake Monster', this creature hails from Sweden, specifically Storsjön. It's an aquatic serpentine monster with the head of a dog, or a cat, depending on the version you've heard. It's so beloved in its native country that it was briefly protected by law.

ORANG-BATI

Depending on who you believe, this creature is either bat-like or monkey-like, but one thing that everyone can agree on is that they eat children. They're pteradon-like, carrying away the infants of Seram in Indonesia, and killing adults with a single bite.



The awesome Andy Lau is making his English-language debut.

➔ "[The script] gave me room to create my visuals and inspired me to come up with many ideas. They left space for me to add my vision," he explains.

"Even though this is what you would call 'a monster popcorn movie', I thought it could be a Zhang Yimou popcorn movie. I'm well aware of the genre I'm working in, and I'm also aware of other filmmakers who have come into a genre, and bend it so much that they end up breaking the genre. I want to make certain that it is a monster movie and it's going to attract young audiences, so it has a certain rhythm and pacing that needs to be there, but on top of that, what I can bring to it makes it unique? I can bring in the Chinese culture and my unique way of fighting these monsters, and that's what makes it special. I

don't want to make it an arthouse movie and make it too deep and esoteric, or the audience will get bored. We want to keep that intense pacing and make it exciting for the audience.

"Of course," he laughs. "This is easy when we talk about it, but to execute it is quite difficult!"

NDEED, IT'S THE BIGGEST FILM EVER MADE IN CHINA, WITH AN ESTIMATED BUDGET OF \$160 MILLION. IT'S A HUGE CO-PRODUCTION, WITH A MULTI-NATIONAL cast and crew, and an epic production schedule. On top of all that, it's Yimou's English-language debut.

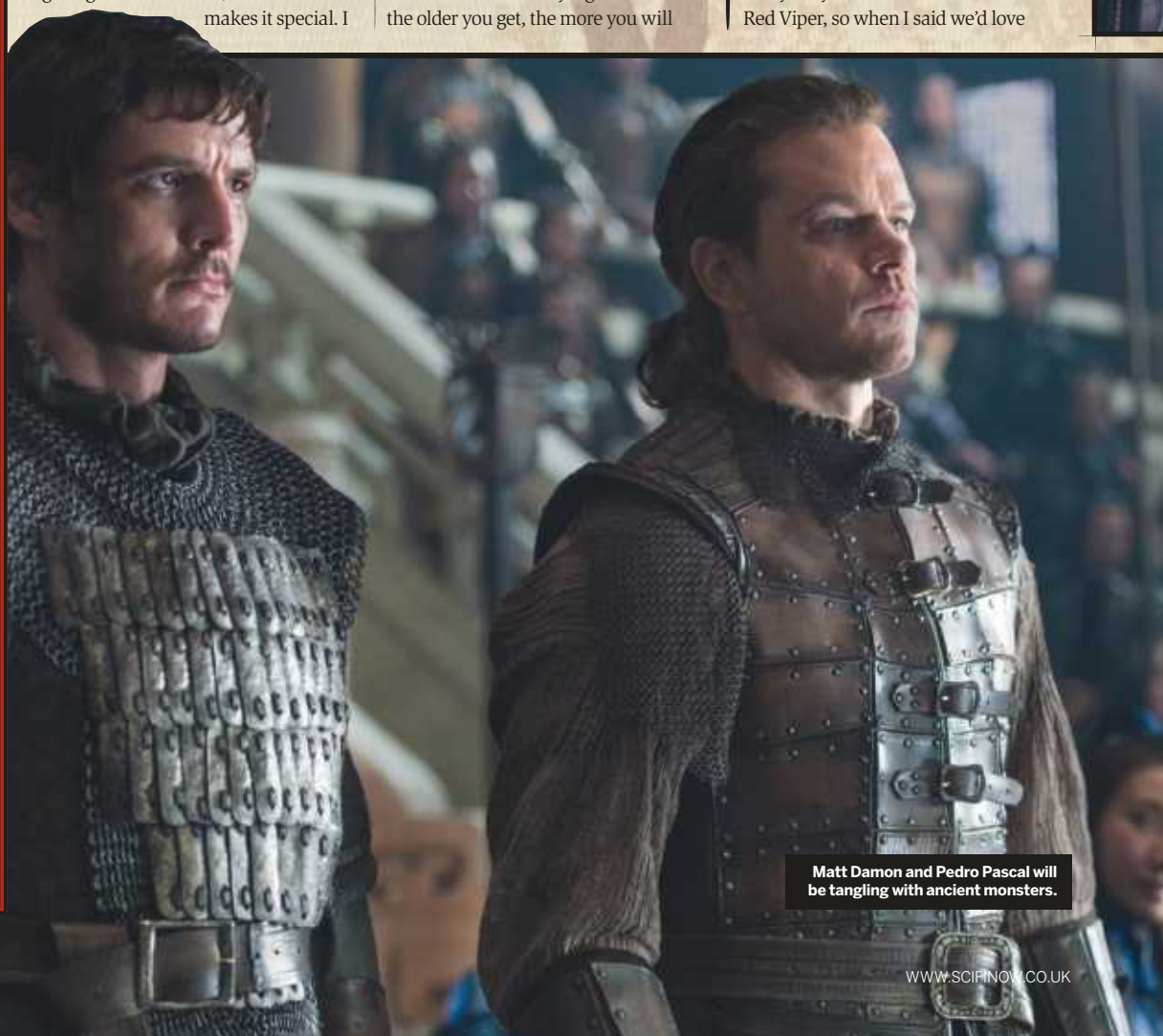
"It is true: this movie is the most complicated movie I have ever made," he tells us. "We have crew members from over 30 countries, and we have 70-80 translators. A lot of time is spent in communication to explain exactly what I'm looking for. Just talking takes three times as long as when I make a Chinese movie to get what I want! But we had the best crew, and the production went very smoothly. Principal photography took four and a half months, and in post-production we had 15 months of VFX. It was very worthwhile, I've learned so much and I've grown so much. There's this saying in Chinese: the older you get, the more you will

I'VE WANTED TO WORK WITH MATT DAMON FOR A LONG TIME
ZHANG YIMOU

learn. That's probably very appropriate here, I had to look at it from a humble perspective and just learn as much as I can. I learned a lot making this movie."

There has already been controversy surrounding the casting of Matt Damon as the perceived white saviour of the film, but Yimou was quick to dispel the idea of whitewashing. He tells us that he's thrilled by the combination of American and Chinese talent on screen.

"First of all, Matt Damon, what can I say?" he enthuses. "I've wanted to work with him for a long time, but never had the chance. This is the third time I've had an opportunity to work with him, and third time's the charm, and I'd say it's fate that I got the chance to work with him. I've always loved and admired Willem Dafoe, and *Game Of Thrones* is very popular in China, and everybody knows Pedro Pascal as the Red Viper, so when I said we'd love



Matt Damon and Pedro Pascal will be tangling with ancient monsters.

THE GREAT WALL

The Great Brawl



The film will be filled with Yimou's trademark gorgeous colours.



There's incredible attention to detail in the costumes and weapons.

THE BEST DEFENSIVE LANDMARKS

The sites of humanity's most memorable supernatural last stands

HADRIAN'S WALL (Doomsday)

In trying to keep England safe from the Reaper virus, the British government rebuilt Hadrian's Wall to keep out the infected, with rabbit-killing machine guns. Did it work? Did it f***.



AREA 51 (Independence Day)

Not quite a historical landmark, but everyone's favourite UFO landing spot/quiet corner of Nevada became the site of mankind's last stand in Roland Emmerich's classic, and also the less good sequel.



STATUE OF LIBERTY (Ghostbusters 2)

They may not make Nikes in her size, but New York's favourite harbour chick is a goddam hero in the Ghostbusters sequel, coming to life and carrying the guys across the city for their showdown with Vigo.



STONEHENGE (Doctor Who)

For a prison strong enough to hold the Doctor, only the Pandorica would do, and that just happened to be located on the site of Stonehenge. Watch out for the Centurion outside; he's been there a long time.



to have him, it turned out that Pedro is a superfan of mine, he has seen every single one of my films. I was so fortunate to end up working with him. All of us wanted to work together, but we never had the opportunity, and this movie provided [it].

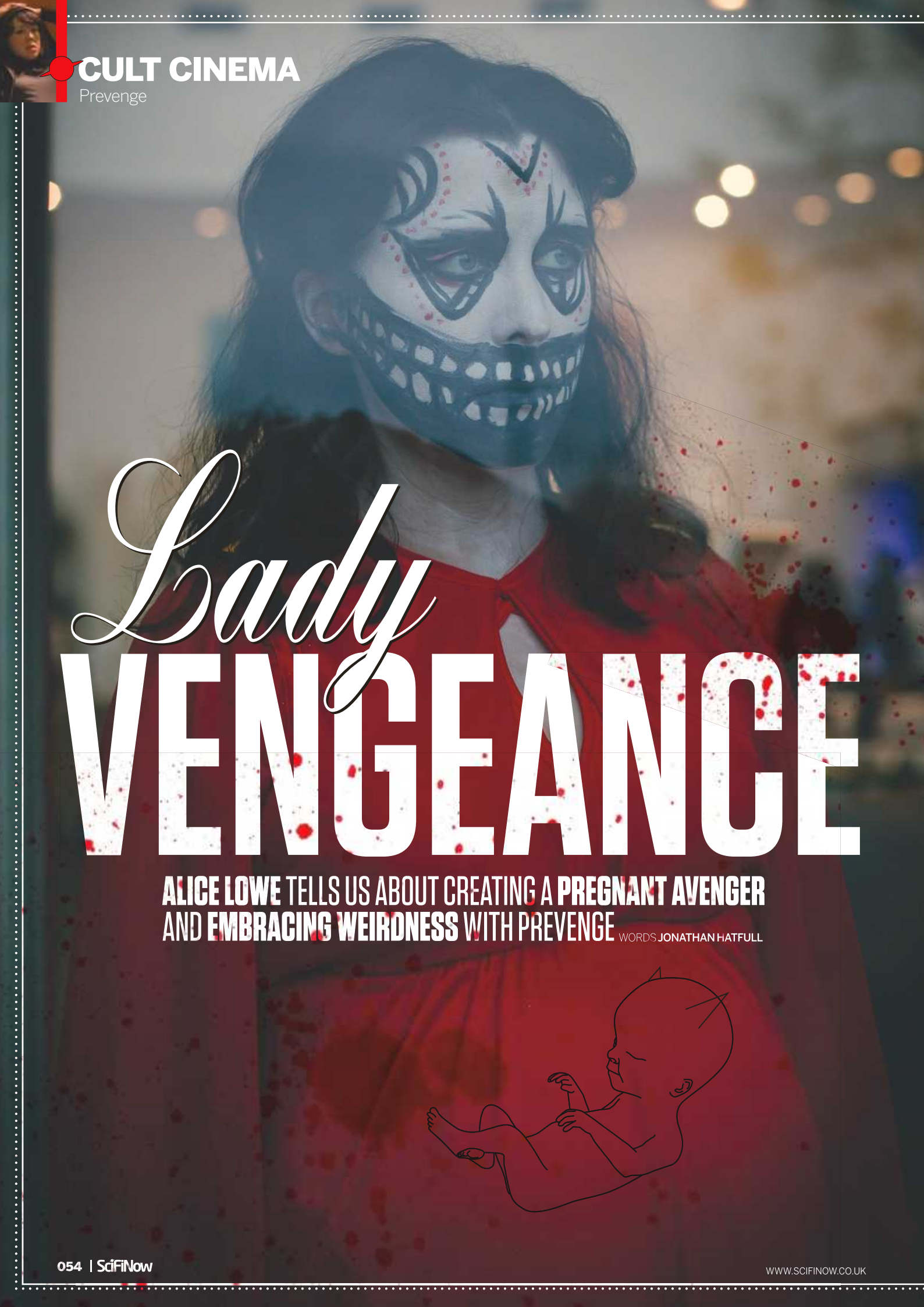
"The Chinese cast, the main roles and supporting roles, are all filled with movie stars," he continues. "Not only Andy Lau, but all the other generals and commanders in the army. I didn't expect them to immediately say yes, but they all agreed to come, that was unexpected, but it was very moving to have that kind of support from all the Chinese actors. It was a perfect match to have everybody who I always wanted to work with and people who wanted to support me coming together and make up this amazing giant cast"

Something that comes up time and again is the idea of the project as an opportunity for collaboration, of people coming together to work on something special, which is mirrored in the use of western and Chinese protagonists.

"The monster in our movie is a very famous ancient Chinese monster, and it's known for eating human beings," Yimou tells us. "It only eats humans. It devours them, swallows them whole. The monster is not prejudiced. It doesn't care if you're a westerner or if you're Chinese; it doesn't care what kind of person you are. There is really no more you or me when you're facing something that great. We become one world, we come together and we have to fend off this monster in this movie."

"Maybe it's a subtext in this movie, is that we have to now unite more than ever in our current situation to face one enemy," he continues. "We are getting closer to facing one enemy and it's probably our environment, whatever it is that will lead to our destruction, if we don't unite and we don't work together it will soon become the end of civilization as we know it, and that might be the subtext of this story." ☞

The Great Wall will be released in cinemas on 17 February.



CULT CINEMA

Prevenge

Lady **VENGEANCE**

**ALICE LOWE TELLS US ABOUT CREATING A PREGNANT AVENGER
AND EMBRACING WEIRDNESS WITH PREVENGE**

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL





FELT LIKE IT HAD TO BE NO-HOLDS BARRED," ALICE LOWE TELLS US. "PREGNANCY IS A VIOLENT ACT IN SOME WAYS: WOMEN DIE GIVING BIRTH, THERE'S

blood and there's gore. A lot of the stuff about pregnancy finishes at pregnancy – you don't see any of the truth of it, so that needs to be reflected with the violence in the film. It needs to be like walking into the operating theatre when someone's having a caesarean. You're going to see it, the truth will out. I didn't want to shy away from anything."

We're talking to Lowe about her outstanding film *Prevenge*, which has wowed festivals around the world. She wrote, directed and starred as Ruth, a heavily pregnant woman who has a list of people to kill, driven on the by the ferocious voice of her unborn child. She shot the film while seven to eight months pregnant, and when we meet her in a café, her daughter comes along too. "She's so nice, she's so smiley!" laughs Lowe. "She's a really well-behaved baby, and I wrote a whole film about how evil she is."

Genre fans will know Lowe from her work on *Sightseers* (which she co-wrote with Steve Oram) and TV shows like *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace*, but she tells us that she was itching to direct. "I didn't necessarily think I was going to do it pregnant!" she explains. "But you think, 'Well, if I take on this challenge, there's no one that can say to me you're not good enough to do this now.' Of course, the gamble is that it's a pile of shit and you're so pregnant that you're really ill, but in a weird way I was relaxed about that, because the baby's more important than the film, so I was like, 'If the film goes to shit, it doesn't matter,' and that was quite liberating."

It definitely didn't go to shit. *Prevenge* is a superb piece of darkly comic horror that juggles laughs, shocks and moments of pathos. It's tonally and stylistically ambitious, and Ruth is a fantastic creation: driven but complex, and deadly. Having dedicated a long time to developing her character in *Sightseers*, there was not the same luxury on *Prevenge*.

"I didn't really have any time to spend on it," Lowe remembers. "I basically had to draw on what was happening to me, because I was six months when I pitched the idea, and then I said, 'If we're going to do it, we've got to do it in the next two months.' But as soon as I thought of the character I kind of knew who she was. It was all the stubborn resistance

to change and transformation that happens when you have a baby. I wanted her to be the absolute opposite of what the stereotype of a pregnant mother is, all this sweetness, self-sacrifice, kindness and generosity, I wanted her to be this merciless, nihilistic, depressed, negative character. There's no glimmer of light, which is why I called her Ruth, because she's ruthless."

Ruth's unstable state of mind is mirrored in the dramatic shifts in tone and in the bold visual style, as the character makes her way through her list with brutal efficiency. "When you've got no budget, you've got to use the editing to psychologically unsettle people, because you haven't got the special effects and whatever to do that," Lowe enthuses. "You are relying on soundscapes, sound mixing, music – I love all of that stuff. It was definitely inspired by Nicolas Roeg and things like *Rosemary's Baby*, but also stuff like *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. The thing that I felt I had to prove as a director was that I had a visual sense and style, and a way I wanted things to look."

The shooting schedule was made up of just 11 days, with each supporting actor (including Kate Dickie, Gemma Whelan, Jo Hartley and Dan Skinner) coming in for a day's worth of filming. "They'd come in and be murdered in the morning, and we'd do all the dialogue stuff in the afternoon!" she laughs. "I enjoy the adrenaline of [low-budget filmmaking], and it makes it a really creative process where you have to find solutions for how you're going to



Alice Lowe writes, directs and stars in this twisted tale.

achieve something, and to me that's the thrill of it."

Prevenge has received a rapturous reception, from its Venice debut to London and Toronto, and part of what's so exciting about it is that it does have a very clear authorial voice, and Lowe tells us that she thinks the film's personal vision is why it's connecting with so many people.

"What I've realised about myself, and it's no bad thing, is that everything I do is very subjective to me," she tells us. "Once you accept that, it means that you have got leeway to jump around chronologically and play with perception. It is one woman's journey, and a mad woman at that. It was a revelation during the edit, 'Oh yeah this is going to be quite a strange film, and that's okay.' I think the more personal something is, the more it does touch other people, actually. I feel like my work's going to be like that. Unapologetically weird!"

Prevenge will be released in cinemas on 10 February.

Ruth's got a list of victims, and there will be no mercy.



SHE'S A REALLY WELL-BEHAVED BABY, AND I WROTE A WHOLE FILM ABOUT HOW EVIL SHE IS!
ALICE LOWE

Ruth isn't exactly in the most stable emotional place.





MUST-SEE TV

Emerald City



EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
SHAUN CASSIDY AND
DAVID SCHULNER TALK
ABOUT THE DARKER
WORLD OF THE WIZARD
OF OZ IN THEIR NEW US
DRAMA, EMERALD CITY

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

**“WE’RE OFF
TO SEE THE
WIZARD”**





IN NBC'S EMERALD CITY, DIRECTOR TARSEM SINGH REIMAGINES THE FANTASY BOOKS OF L FRANK BAUM, WITH DOROTHY GALE SWEEPED UP INTO A TORNADO AND

transported to another world. But unlike the classic movie of 1939, Singh's tale has no musical numbers and a darker edge to the epic story.

In 2014, James Franco landed the iconic role of The Wizard with Disney's big-budget fantasy epic *Oz: The Great And Powerful*, and a parallel universe was created for the much-loved musical *Wicked*.

Now, the Land Of Oz is heading into uncharted territory with *Emerald City*, which stars *Person Of Interest* actress Adria Arjona as a 20-year-old Dorothy and *Daredevil* actor Vincent D'Onofrio as the all-powerful Wizard.

We catch up with executive producers Shaun Cassidy and David Schulner to find out more...

How would you describe *Emerald City*?

Shaun Cassidy: *Emerald City* is a fantasy drama. It's a re-imagining of the 14 books of L Frank Baum's *Wizard Of Oz* stories.

David Schulner: It's a big sweeping epic about a young woman's quest to find her strength, to find her mother, and ultimately to find her way home.

Which of the 14 books was the main inspiration for your story?

SC: If you had to make a comparison, books one and two are the most prominent in our story, but there's a lot more to it than that.

DS: There will be lots of signposts that will be recognisable from book one, which became the musical movie of 1939, but as soon as you start meeting characters like Tip, Jack and Ojo, you realise we cover many of the books. In the books, Ojo doesn't come into the story until much later, but he's one of the first people Dorothy meets in Oz.

Where does your story start?

SC: Dorothy starts off in Kansas. She gets caught in a twister and ends up in Oz, but it's very different to the 1939 movie in our story. For starters, our Dorothy is older. She is a nurse who is looking for her mother. She ends up travelling to Oz in a very different way than in the original film and any other incarnations of the books. ➤

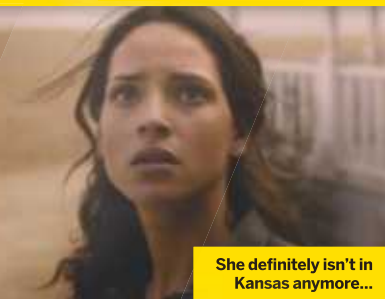


MUST-SEE TV

Emerald City



The Land of Oz is a very different place to the one we're used to seeing.



She definitely isn't in Kansas anymore...



➤ **DS:** She doesn't get sucked up into a twister inside a house. She takes cover from the twister in a police car, but the car gets sucked up and hits the Wicked Witch Of The East when it lands in Oz.

Does Toto make an appearance?

SC: There's a dog in the back of the car; a K9 unit. When Dorothy lands in Oz, she meets the Munchkins, and their word for dog is 'Toto'. When she meets the villagers, they all look at the K9 and say, "Toto, Toto, Toto!"

So the Munchkins are present?

SC: They are. Except in our story, they are not little; they are very big. They are like Maui warriors.

DS: With *Emerald City*, we want to pay homage to the movie and books,

but we wanted to find a new way to tell the story that could be surprising. We don't want to give people things they've already seen, because people can go and watch the movie again if that's what they want, or they can go and see *Wicked* again. We wanted to be different, which is one of the reasons why the Munchkins and various other characters are different in our story.

You've made the Scarecrow [aka Lucas, played by Oliver Jackson-Cohen] a love interest for Dorothy. Why did you move in that direction?

DS: The love interest aspect happened organically, because they are on this Yellow Brick Road trying to find someone who can help them. They are both trying to help each other heal.

“WE WANT TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE MOVIE... TO THE BOOKS, WE WANTED TO FIND A NEW WAY TO TELL THE STORY THAT COULD BE SURPRISING”
DAVID SCHULNER

SC: He's also not a scarecrow. When he's found, he's been hung up. He was crucified. He's a soldier and he's lost his memory. He's been tarred and he's got a bunch of straw on him, so he's certainly representative of the Scarecrow character, but he's not a scarecrow.

DS: In our version he has a brain, but he doesn't have a memory. That's what they have to find.

What can you tell us about the Tin Man in your story?

DS: [He] doesn't appear until episode four, but he's probably the most literal character interpretation from the books.

SC: All of the characters you know will be represented. They are just represented in different and hopefully unique, fresh ways.

WONDERFUL WORLD OF OZ The most memorable Baum adaptations

1900	1938	1976	1978	1985	1990
The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz L Frank Baum's novel is first published, receiving rave reviews.	The Wizard Of Oz film adaptation hits cinemas, starring Judy Garland as Dorothy, Frank Morgan as the Wizard of Oz and Ray Bolger as the Lion.	Oz – A Rock 'N' Roll Road Movie An Australian musical take on the famed book, accompanied by the tagline 'Just follow the yellow rock road'. Dorothy is in a motorcycle accident and enters the dream world.	The Wiz Following the Aussies, America create a musical adventure film slated as an 'urban reimagining' of <i>The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz</i> . It stars Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and Richard Pryor as the Wiz.	Return To Oz Dorothy goes back to Oz in a film based around two of Baum's novels. It isn't an official sequel to the original film.	The Wonderful Galaxy Of Oz (Space Oz no Bōken) A Japanese anime that saw Dorothy and her friends adventuring in the galaxy of Oz. It ran for only 76 minutes, and was dubbed for an American release.





Dorothy's (Adria Arjona) dog has gotten an upgrade!

So there is a Lion, too?

SC: He appears in episode eight, but that's all I'll say.

What are the main themes?

SC: The biggest theme is the war between science and magic. Female empowerment is also a huge theme. We have seven or eight incredibly strong female characters in the show.

DS: Oz is a matriarchal world before the Wizard comes along. The Wizard sees this power and banishes magic from all the Witches, so this matriarchy is suddenly thrust with a patriarchal ruler, and it does not go very well.

Will the iconic ruby slippers make an appearance?

SC: There are no ruby slippers in our show because they weren't in the books. In the movie, they made the slippers red – or ruby – because they had Technicolor, and wanted to see a bright red colour. In the original books, the slippers were silver.

Does this mean we will see silver slippers in the show?

SC: We don't have those either!

DS: When Dorothy kills the Wicked Witch Of The East, she gets something from her. In our version, she gets ruby gauntlets.

What do you think of the comparisons being made with *Game Of Thrones*?

DS: We appreciate the comparison and we hope our show is as successful as *Game Of Thrones*, but with *Emerald City*, our goal is to be as beautiful and romantic and epic as possible. The violence in *Game Of Thrones* is

indicative of the world they've created, but that's not our world. It's a world that's been run by women; by witches for hundreds of thousands of years.

Why did you decide to go darker than the 1939 musical movie?

SC: All fairy tales are dark. *Snow White* is a dark story. *Hansel And Gretel* is a dark story. Even though *The Wizard Of Oz* was a big, bright musical, it was still scary. There were flying monkeys and witches! I was a little boy watching it and it scared me. Our story has scary aspects, but it's really beautiful to look at. There is romance and adventure, but Dorothy's journey will definitely take her through some dark and scary places.

Why did you decide to hire *The Cell* director Tarsem Singh for all of Season One?

DS: We needed someone who could rise to the occasion and create this epic new world. There's only a handful of directors who could have done that.

SC: It's very hard to show audiences something they've never seen before, but Tarsem has spent his whole career shooting in very, very exotic locations. He's been creating a checklist of places he wanted to go back to, and he returned to a lot of them for our show. People might expect a lot of scenes that are extraordinary visually to be CGI, but they are aren't. They are real places.

Why do L Frank Baum's stories still resonate with audiences?

SC: Even though the original books were written 100 years ago, the themes are very resonant now. There are issues about female empowerment and gender identity. There are issues about science, magic, religion and war. We didn't have to dig very deep to make our story feel contemporary. ✨

Emerald City will air on 5STAR in February.



Ana Ularu plays 'West'. Wonder if she's a Wicked Witch...

2003

Wicked
The prequel novel hit Broadway, becoming the most loved musical in recent years. Sequels to the book follows in 2005, 2008 and 2011. 'Defying Gravity' becomes iconic.



2005

The Muppet's Wizard Of Oz
It hits television screens courtesy of Disney, and stars Queen Latifah as Aunt Em, Ashanti as Dorothy, Kermit as the Scarecrow, Miss Piggy as the witches. We wish we had known about this sooner!

2007

Tin Man
Tin Man became the miniseries event of 2007 for the Sci-Fi Channel, starring none other than Zoëy Deschanel, Neal McDonough and Alan Cumming. Check it out!





BIG MOVIE

Resident Evil: The Final Chapter

PAUL WS
ANDERSON
TELLS US
ABOUT
FINISHING THE
RESIDENT EVIL
FRANCHISE
WITH ALICE'S
GREATEST
BATTLE YET

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL





THE LAST STAND

ALL THINGS COME TO AN END – EVEN GENRE MOVIE FRANCHISES. WE OFTEN BEMOAN THE LACK OF DECENT VIDEOGAME ADAPTATIONS, BUT PAUL

WS Anderson's *Resident Evil* movies have been entertaining audiences for nearly 15 years, grossing over \$900 million across five films and making a bona fide genre icon out of Milla Jovovich's zombie-slaying Alice.

Now, it's time for *The Final Chapter*, one last stand to save humanity from the Umbrella Corporation's evil machinations, and Anderson is back as writer and director to bring the series across the finish line in style.

"On the one hand it's super exciting. I couldn't be more proud of the fact that we've made a six-movie franchise, and I'm excited to bring it to a close," he tells

us. "I can tell the truth about Alice, the Umbrella corporation's agenda and the reality of the Red Queen. It's fantastic to be able to do it on our own terms. But equally it's bittersweet, because it's been such a big part of my life, and I've enjoyed making the movies. It's hard to believe that it's all over."

Each successive film has found new ways to up the ante, from Red Square carnage to a desert full of swarming infected crows, while *Retribution* ended with Alice and her fellow survivors gazing out at a flaming warzone from the roof of the White House.

"The movie begins where the last one left off, and there's been an epic battle for the future of humanity that hasn't gone terribly well for humanity," Anderson teases. "We follow Alice from that point on a last desperate bid to return to Raccoon City and the Hive to try and bring about an end to the infection before the human race is extinguished completely."

As with all last-ditch struggles to save humankind, there's a time limit, which brings the series back full circle. "The whole movie takes place in a compressed 48-hour period, which returns us to one of the strengths of the original movie," he enthuses. "There was always a ticking clock. While the franchise has become associated with big action, the first movie actually had a very claustrophobic intensity to it that really helped with the horror."

That we're getting back to horror is great news not only for fans of the first movie, but also of the games. Having seen footage of the *Resident Evil* VR experience, it feels as if the games are getting back to their pants-



Milla Jovovich and Ali Larter are back alongside newcomer Ruby Rose.

➤ soiling roots, and we're thrilled to hear that Anderson is following suit.

"This movie takes place in The Hive, so it's a return to some of the strengths of the first film while not losing the big action the franchise has become associated with. It's kind of a return to the horror roots of the movie franchise," Anderson explains. "We've got brand new creatures, including the Bloodshot from the last game, which is truly a grotesque, distorted, monstrous creation, and I mean that in the best possible sense. The movie has some fantastic scares in it – it's really one of the scariest movies that I've ever made."

While Umbrella's Albert Wesker (Shawn Roberts) is back, we're particularly excited that Iain Glen is returning as the presumed-dead Dr Isaacs. "It's amazing to work with Iain again," enthuses Anderson. "On the morning when we were shooting his death scene in the third movie, he said, 'You know Paul, I think you might find I could come back to this franchise! It is the Umbrella corporation after all – they could have cloned me.' And I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, Iain, whatever.' I called him years later when he was on a break from *Game Of Thrones*, and he said, 'I'm glad to see you've finally seen it my way!'"

Ali Larter is also back as Claire Redfield, and there are new faces, like *Martin's* Eoin Macken and *Orange Is The New Black's* Ruby Rose. However, the movies have always been about Alice, and Jovovich has been a crucial part of why we keep coming back to this series.

"When we made the first movie, it was unfashionable to have a female lead in an action film – you just didn't do it," remembers Anderson. "I think it helped that the first movie was put together outside Hollywood; it was a UK German co-production. Now, of course, with the success of *Resident Evil* and movies like that, that's become much more

IT'S A RETURN TO THE HORROR ROOTS OF THE MOVIE FRANCHISE – IT'S REALLY ONE OF THE SCARIEST MOVIES I'VE EVER MADE

PAUL WS ANDERSON

acceptable, and it's even encouraged now, but I think *Resident Evil* helped break down some barriers, and that makes me very proud. Milla is without doubt the longest-running female lead of an action franchise, and that's something I take great pleasure in."

It's rare to find a filmmaker so heavily invested and involved in an action franchise. Although he didn't direct the second and third films (temporarily replaced by Alexander Witt and Russell Mulcahy respectively), he's written every one, and his sensibility has been clear throughout.

"The videogame has constantly evolved as well – it's like the T-virus, it keeps evolving and mutating," he tells us. "I think that the *Resident Evil* franchise was tapping into things that were a little ahead of their time. Alice's battle with the Umbrella Corporation is the heart of the movies, and I think that idea of the evil corporation and corporate malfeasance is

something the videogame was talking about long before people were really aware of that in the real world. It's David against Goliath, and it's something that makes me excited to return."

As calm as he sounds, there's a lot riding on *The Final Chapter*. This is not just the closing film of a six-movie franchise; this is the end of a 15 year-long career chapter. "There's definitely huge pressure to end strong, because it's not like you're going to get another chance at the Final-er Chapter or the Final-est Chapter," he laughs. "I wanted to try and make the best movie in the franchise, because it's dealing with the fate of Alice, who people have been following for the whole franchise. There's a real emotional component that you might not associate with *Resident Evil*. I'm very excited to put that in front of an audience." ☞

Resident Evil: The Final Chapter will be out in cinemas on 2 February.



William Levy is one of the new cast members for *The Final Chapter*.

THE FINAL CHAPTER?

We've been fooled before...

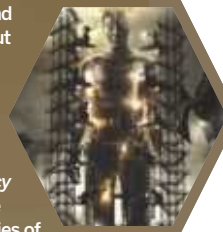
THE FINAL DESTINATION (2009)

The fourth movie was publicised as the final *Final Destination*, but the combination of a massive box-office haul and bad reviews meant another movie was green-lit to get it right.



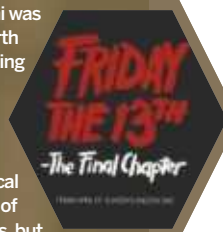
SAW 3D: THE FINAL CHAPTER (2010)

To be fair, we had six years without any new traps from *Jigsaw*, but we're excited by the possibility that *Saw: Legacy* will rid us of the terrible memories of *The Final Chapter*.



FRIDAY 13TH: THE FINAL CHAPTER (1984)

Even Tom Savini was sold on the fourth *Jason* movie being the last one, as he agreed to return to provide the amazing practical effects. It's one of the best sequels, but it definitely wasn't the last.



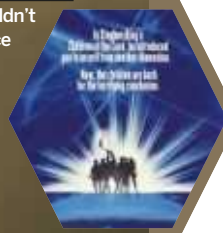
FREDDY'S DEAD: THE FINAL NIGHTMARE (1991)

New Line's publicity for the sixth *Elm Street* included a funeral for everyone's favourite quip-spewing child killer, but it was followed by Wes Craven's brilliantly meta *New Nightmare*.



CHILDREN OF THE CORN II: THE FINAL SACRIFICE (1992)

Actually, we couldn't find any evidence that this was supposed to be the last movie about the field-dwelling murder children beyond the title and the tagline, promising "The terrifying conclusion." Sneaky.



Our thoughts on the pick
of the entertainment
releases out this month

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ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY 64

"RATHER THAN DETRACTING FROM THE
SOURCE, IT VALIDATES LUCAS'S VISION"



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were right.

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST
SEE NOW' AWARD GOES
TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE
FOUR OR FIVE...

SciFiNow
Must
see now!

64 CINEMA Theatrical releases

- 64 Rogue One:
A Star Wars Story
- 65 Prevenge
- 65 Underworld:
Blood Wars
- 66 Monster Trucks
- 66 The Love Witch
- 67 A Monster Calls



68 HOME/FILM Films on DVD, Blu-ray and more

- 68 Fright Night
- 68 The Cabinet Of
Dr Caligari
- 68 Morgan
- 69 Doctor Mordrid
- 69 Rupture
- 69 The Guyver
- 70 Donnie Darko
- 70 The Church
- 70 Don't Breathe



71 HOME/TV TV shows on DVD, Blu-ray and more

- 71 Arrow/The Flash/
Supergirl/Legends Of
Tomorrow Crossover
- 72 Agents Of SHIELD:
Season Three
- 72 Humans: Series Two

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12A

Director

Gareth Edwards

Screenwriters

Chris Weitz, Gary Whitta, John Knoll, Tony Gilroy

Cast

Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Donnie Yen, Wen Jiang, Alan Tudyk, Ben Mendelsohn, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen

Distributor

Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

Running Time

134 mins



I SENSE A FAMILIAR PRESENCE...

Returning characters from the saga

Darth Vader

Still mysterious to the galaxy at large, the Dark Lord of the Sith doesn't disappoint when he shows up.

Mon Mothma

After being cut from *Revenge Of The Sith*, the Rebel leader gets a decent amount of screen time.

Bail Organa

Jimmy Smits shows up as Leia's foster-dad. Little does he know that his days are numbered.

Grand Moff Tarkin

Having had a rivalry with Krennic established in tie-in novel *Catalyst*, the two butt heads here once again.



A Death Star is born

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

So much has been made of how *Rogue One* was looking to shine a searchlight on the dark, grimy reality of the conflict pervading *Star Wars* that it doesn't appear the question of whether its universe actually lends itself to such an approach has been pondered.

George Lucas's original six-part saga was essentially fairy tale intertwined with epic tragedy, with clear-cut good and bad guys. What happens when you add extra pieces to a jigsaw puzzle that is apparently already complete? The answer is a positive one. Rather than detracting from the source, it validates Lucas's vision.

Even so, there is a great darkness at the heart of *Rogue One*. Instead of wide-eyed farmboys, indifferent droids or carefree smugglers, its protagonists aren't just shoved into the action. By the time you meet them, they pretty much without exception have already been to hell and back.

There certainly isn't much Luke Skywalker in Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) – even Rey is carefree by comparison. Raised to fight and little else, she is our perfect entry point into the dark underbelly of the *Star Wars* universe.

The Rebellion is fragmented among its various factions (Forest Whitaker's unhinged, mutilated Saw Gerrera providing a none-too-subtle illustration of what it is in danger of becoming), and the Empire is tightening its grip on the galaxy, with the completion of a certain superweapon intended to snuff out any last breath of resistance.

In the event, the core ensemble comes together in surprisingly organic fashion: Rebel spy Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) is partnered with Jyn against his will, dragging along reprogrammed Imperial security droid K-2SO (a perennially scene-stealing Alan Tudyk) for the ride.

Along the way, defecting pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed) and blind Force-embracing warrior/gun-toting cynic duo Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen) and Baze Malbus (Wen Jiang) complete the band, all getting their moments.

Amid such a desolate backdrop, levity is needed, and happily it is provided. Fan service and nods are liberally sprinkled in a welcomingly non-intrusive manner that the Marvel and DC Cinematic universes could learn from. This is accompanied by an



added element, the nature of which we won't spoil here, but could prove to be a special effects game-changer.

Yet it isn't all smooth flying. While it's clear that changes were made (a large number of scenes from the trailers are absent), you get the sense that 20 minutes at least could have been lost, most notably from the climatic battle scene that challenges *Return Of The King's* finale for sheer unendingness.

Then we have Director Krennic. While there's little wrong with Ben Mendelsohn's performance, you have to wonder how someone with such a strong line in incompetence managed to rise so highly up the Empire's chain of command. Admittedly, few villains stand comparison against Darth Vader (who is used sparingly, but splendidly), although he stands out as a misstep.

Even so, *Rogue One* is an achievement. Every other *Star Wars* movie has only ever had the responsibility of telling part of a story – this manages the whole thing in one go. Ultimately, our faith in Gareth Edwards to deliver something worthy of the saga's name has been validated.

Steve Wright

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Monsters

If it wasn't for this, Gareth Edwards wouldn't have landed the *Star Wars* gig.





PREVENGE

Whatever baby wants, baby gets

Details 18 // 88 mins // 10 February **Director** Alice Lowe **Screenwriter** Alice Lowe **Cast** Alice Lowe, Jo Hartley, Kayvan Novak, Kate Dickie, Gemma Whelan **Distributor** Kaleidoscope Entertainment



Sightseers co-writer/star Alice Lowe makes her directorial debut with a superb jolt of

horror, dark humour and energy that confirms her as one of our most exciting talents and gives us an unforgettable lead character.

She's Ruth; eight months pregnant and out to kill everyone on her list, driven by the voice of her unborn child.

The fact that Lowe shot this film while actually eight months pregnant is obviously hugely impressive, but the physical feat of this shouldn't distract from just how good *Prevenge* is. Lowe deftly juggles tones to create something that defies easy categorisation. Ruth is a remorseless killer, but the film refuses to treat her as some kind of two-dimensional monster. There are times when we really feel for Ruth, a lost woman whose body and mind have been hijacked, and others when we really don't, which makes her a lot of fun to watch.



With shifting sympathies, complex characterisation and bold stylistic choices, the atmosphere shifts suddenly, and to great effect. The brutal violence comes with moments of pathos followed by savagely funny humour, whether it's Kate Dickie's workaholic realising how empty her life is while trying to tell Ruth what she does in her spare time, or our protagonist and her unborn baby debating whether the hipster choices of an innocent bystander meant he would have gone to the police.

The supporting actors are perfect, with Dan Skinner as an exotic pet shop owner, Tom Davis as a slovenly DJ, Gemma Whelan as a punchy athlete and Kayvan Novak as the climbing instructor at the end of Ruth's list, while Jo Hartley is brilliant as Ruth's midwife, who is increasingly concerned by her patient's comments about how the baby is in control.

This is Lowe's showcase. She gives a predictably excellent central performance, and it's exciting to see a film that's this confident, bold and entertaining.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Sightseers
Lowe and Steve Oram write and star in this black comedy about murdering caravanners.

UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS

Beckinsale bites back

Details 15 // 91 mins // 13 January **Director** Anna Foerster **Screenwriter** Cory Goodman **Cast** Kate Beckinsale, Theo James, Lara Pulver, Tobias Menzies, Charles Dance **Distributor** Sony Pictures



Gothic castles, beautifully bleak noir cinematography, heart-pounding action and fiendishly confident

characters played by a colourful cluster of recognisable scenery-chewing British actors – all the ingredients you need, you would think, for a smashingly entertaining and adrenaline-inducing vampire action romp. What a shame, then, about the lukewarm and largely lumpy results.

Well, you have to applaud the *Underworld* series for at least getting two things right: presenting the cinematic world with an-all-too-rare kick-ass female action hero in Kate Beckinsale's always watchable Selene, and for affording British vets like Bill Nighy and Charles Dance the opportunity to wield flowery but largely inert dialogue to try and make it sound slightly enthralling.

This fifth instalment in the long-running vampires-versus-werewolves series sees the recently wronged Selene once again team up with David (Theo James) to try and resolve the eternal conflict between the warring creature clans and defeat new hybrid Lycan leader Marius (Tobias Menzies) before he finds her daughter and feasts on her revitalising blood.

There's a memorable F-bomb snigger-inducing moment that's



indicative of the tonal uncertainty, shortly followed by some contest roaring that'll make you sneer furthermore, but leave you unsure if the hilarity is indeed intended. When it comes to *Underworld*, sadly the sharpness of *Blade* is merely an unobtainable dream.

Despite being derogatory, action-splattered affairs, with five films in 13 years, a firmly dedicated fan base and no signs of slowing down, you have to come to the conclusion that the clearly critic-proof series is as relentlessly immortal as the majority of its characters. Those same fans should at the very least receive an award for their staying power and while you're at it give another to Beckinsale for being as watchably kick-ass as ever. It's just all strangely unconvincing viewing for the rest of us.

Oliver Pfeiffer

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Fearless Vampire Killers
Knowingly spooky and hilarious, and thus a class act.



MONSTER TRUCKS

Those monsters just keep on truckin'

Details PG // 105 mins // Out now **Director** Chris Wedge **Screenwriter** Derek Connolly **Cast** Lucas Till, Jane Levy, Thomas Lennon, Holt McCallany, Samara Weaving, Aliyah O'Brien **Distributor** Paramount



What if Monster

Trucks were actually monsters? The idea for this family friendly fantasy

adventure famously came about as a result of conversation between former Paramount president Adam Goodman and his four-year-old son. That certainly explains the frankly bizarre concept, in which a large, alien-like subterranean creature discovers that it can operate a truck by crawling inside the chassis and spinning various axles with its many tentacles. Admittedly, it's a tough sell, but if you can get past that ridiculous premise then it's surprisingly entertaining.

Set in present-day North Dakota, the film stars Lucas Till as truck-loving teenager Tripp, who befriends a weird, oil-drinking creature he finds hiding in his junkyard. After the creature (which Tripp names Creech – creativity isn't his strong suit) demonstrates his truck-pimping-and-driving ability, Tripp and his smitten classmate Meredith (Jane Levy) embark on a mission to rescue Creech's parents from the evil mining corporation that are holding them captive.

Director Chris Wedge (*Ice Age*) proves the right choice for this cartoon-ish, kiddie-friendly romp, providing both a snappy pace and a sense of goofy fun. On a similar note, the film frequently taps into



a nostalgic fondness for the sort of Eighties knock-off alien-based pictures that sprung up after the success of *ET* – think *Mac And Me*, only with much better effects.

The logistics of the monsters operating trucks don't really bear close scrutiny, but hey, at least they've got cute, smiley faces and gurgle adorably when they laugh.

The script could have used another pass, as some of the supporting characters are very poorly served (Amy Ryan has just two scenes as Tripp's mum, and Tucker Albrizzi is wasted as Tripp's nerdy friend), and the dialogue is occasionally clunky, but the cast play it commendably straight, with Till making for a likeable lead and Levy delivers a scene-stealing performance that saves the film from two-star ignominy.

Matthew Turner

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

***batteries not included**
Family friendly fun about tiny living spaceships who like to fix things.



THE LOVE WITCH

The wiccan and the divine

Details 15 // 120 mins // 10 March **Director** Anna Biller **Screenwriter** Anna Biller **Cast** Samantha Robinson, Jeffrey Vincent Parise, Laura Waddell, Gian Keys **Distributor** Icon



The Love Witch is so beautifully made that, at a certain point, you start to wonder why everyone else isn't

trying as hard. This immaculate tribute to Sixties Technicolor and soap-opera melodrama is stunning to look at, and shows an incredible clarity of vision, voice and skill. Although the setup could suggest a winking parody (rear projection, witches facing prejudice from narrow-minded small-town folk, love spells going wrong), Biller's love for the material that she is referencing is contagious. It's not long before we're under her spell as surely as the hapless men are under the witch's.

Samantha Robinson plays the titular character, who has her heart set on finding her true love – a real man who will give her all the love and affection she needs, the hero of her Tarot cards. But finding a man who doesn't prove to be a spineless wimp or dolt turns out to be a difficult task, and the bodies are piling up.

In addition to writing and directing, Biller is the film's editor, costume designer, composer, art director, set decorator, production designer... oh, and producer. Beyond the gorgeous, well, *everything*, there is more here than a straightforward pastiche. Robinson's performance is excellent, creating a character that is absolutely steadfast in her view of the world and what she wants from it, and creates real sympathy for her.

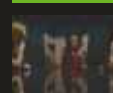
There's an interesting balance between the celebration of Elaine's pristine beauty, her child-like romantic fantasies and Biller's decision to show the elements of her love spells, which would shock the men that she's seducing, including urine and bloody tampons. The surface pleasures are certainly a joy, but Biller's voice sounds clearly throughout.

The running time may test the patience of some viewers, and it will have to fight to break out of the 'niche appeal' bracket, but *The Love Witch* deserves to find a wider audience.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Kiss Of The Damned

Cassavetes' tribute to erotic Euro-horror is criminally overlooked.



FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
PG

Director
JA Bayona

Screenwriter
Patrick Ness

Cast
Lewis MacDougall,
Felicity Jones,
Sigourney Weaver, Liam
Neeson, Toby Kebbell

Distributor
Entertainment One

Running Time
108 mins



A MONSTER CALLS

Tree of life

JA Bayona's live-action

adaptation of Patrick Ness' beloved novel *A Monster Calls* will provoke floods of tears from adults and children alike, but it also adheres firmly to the book's mission statement: that fairy tales are as vital as they are entertaining.

There will inevitably be quibbles about whether this is too dark, scary or slow for the younger viewers that it is aimed at, but the story is an important one, and it does not talk down to its audience.

Conor O'Malley (Lewis MacDougall) lives with his single mother (Felicity Jones), who is undergoing treatment for cancer. Scared, frustrated, lonely and angry, Conor is pitied by his teachers and bullied by his peers. One night, at 12:07, the ground shakes and the yew tree in the church graveyard uproots itself. This monster (Liam Neeson) strides to the boy's window and tells him that it will tell Conor three stories that will help. In return, Conor must tell the monster a fourth story: the nightmare that he has every night.

Having directed *The Orphanage* and *The Impossible*, Bayona, in a sense, brings it all together for this blend of

classic fairy tale and family drama.

The two bleed into each other as the line between fantasy and reality is kept deliberately vague, with Conor's rage and frustration feeding into his encounters with the monster, and back into his confrontations with his sneering classmates, his kindly but barely there dad (Toby Kebbell) and his stern grandma (Sigourney Weaver).

It's all almost unbearably heartbreaking, but there's a consistent raw honesty that keeps it from becoming either bucket of treacle or piece of cynical emotional manipulation. You could point out that there's not a lot of subtlety, but that would be overlooking the fact that the film is told from the point of view of Conor and his anger. His world is being taken away from him, and no one is giving him a satisfactory response. His mum keeps telling him that she's going to get better, his dad won't rescue him from his grandma, and no matter what he does, no one is willing to punish him because, as they keep telling him, "What would possibly be the point in that?"

That 'unsuitable' accusation also does a tremendous disservice to the cast. MacDougall is superb in the lead role, and shows an incredible emotional range, and he's backed up by very good work from Jones and Kebbell. Weaver's starriness threatens to be a distracting presence early on, but that concern quickly vanishes, and she is brilliant as the stone-faced but quietly distraught grandmother. It almost goes without saying that Neeson's rumbling tones are a perfect fit for the monster.



There are one or two flaws to be made out through the tears. The beautifully rendered animated stories do sometimes seem a little slight when sitting alongside some of the film's raw emotional sequences, the effects' intrusions into the real world doesn't always quite work, and there are moments when the film almost loses its footing, nearly (but never quite) falling into the obvious deadly traps of sentimentalism and emotional exploitation.

That Bayona almost completely manages to keep the film from feeling like it's taking cheap shots at your tear ducts is truly impressive, and there is a real power to *A Monster Calls*. It acknowledges the importance of stories and fantasy, and it beautifully portrays the horrible, tangled mess of emotions that make up grief. Even though it's roaring its message in your face, it's a message that is undeniably important, incredibly moving and honestly delivered.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Pan's Labyrinth
Del Toro's masterpiece finds a young girl overcoming horrors with the help of a faun.

GREATEST NON-ANDY SERKIS MO-CAP PERFORMANCES

Toby Kebbell
Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes (2014)

Kebbell's a mo-cap veteran now after Orc-ing up for *Warcraft*, but we'd go with his brilliant turn as the livewire, treacherous Koba in the excellent *Apes* sequel.

Crispin Glover
Beowulf (2007)

There was a lot of less-than-convincing mo-cap in Robert Zemeckis' animated epic, but Glover's screaming, olde English-speaking monster was a definite high point.

Sharlto Copley
Chappie (2015)

We loved *Chappie*, god damn it, and we particularly loved Copley's turn as the childlike robot with a heart of gold. Robot gangster number one!

Alan Tudyk
I, Robot (2004)

Tudyk is currently stealing scenes as frank robot K-2SO in *Rogue One*, and his turn as Sonny in the otherwise-just-okay Isaac Asimov adaptation was truly excellent.

Jason Cope
District 9 (2009)

Sharlto Copley may have been the break-out performance in Neill Blomkamp's debut, but Cope's performances as Christopher Johnson sold us on the aliens.



FRIGHT NIGHT

You're in for a scare

Details 18 // 106 mins // 1985 // **Released** Out now **Director** Tom Holland
Cast Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale, Amanda Bearse, Roddy McDowall
Distributor Eureka



Many films lay claim to the title 'horror-comedy', but few actually own it with any real success. *Fright*

Night succeeds in being a member of this select band, successfully straddling the line between being laugh-out-loud funny and utterly horrifying in equal measure.

Following horror-loving teen Charley Brewster (William Ragsdale) and his idol, TV storyteller Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall) as he attempts to stop charming vampire Jerry Dandrige (Chris Sarandon) from turning his girlfriend Amy (Amanda Bearse) and mother Judy (Dorothy Fielding), it's a conventional setup that will be immediately familiar to any discerning fan of fang-tastic Eighties frighteners. What separates it is the commitment to being both terrifying and a rollocking good time.

Even so, the closest touchstone we can think of is John Landis's *An American Werewolf In London*, both due to its successful balancing of the two genres and of its visual ingenuity. The scene in which a staked 'Evil Ed' slowly and painfully returns back to human form still constitutes an impressive display of special effects today, and Sarandon is the perfect undead stalker: impeccably polite and charming in human form, but monstrous and terrifying when embracing his vampiric instincts. You almost want to take his side. Almost.

On top of that, Roddy McDowall's Peter Vincent is a brilliant creation, by shades bombastic and arrogant, yet still unsure of himself. David Tennant's portrayal in the 2011 remake owes a lot to him. Catch up with the interviews included as extras within this edition, and you can fully understand just how much



SCIFINOW
Must see now!



better this film is as a consequence of having him there.

The cheesier elements are hard to deny, but come on – it's called *Fright Night*. Would you have it any other way? Genuinely timeless, we'll always make time in our Halloween schedules for this.

Steve Wright

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



An American Werewolf In London
 Arguably John Landis's finest hour.

THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI

Restoration complete

Details U // 77 mins // 1920 // **Released** 16 January
Director Robert Wiene **Cast** Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt, Friedrich Feher, Lil Dagover, Hans Heinz von Twardowski **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



Finding new things to say about classic films can seem like an uphill struggle at times, but fortunately *The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* is the gift that keeps on giving.

Released once more on dual format by Masters Of Cinema, Robert Wiene's expressionistic classic remains enjoyable on a number of levels – whether purely as a Gothic thriller that draws liberally and with relish from the works of Bram Stoker and Edgar Allan Poe, or as an interactive storyboard for future icons like Tim Burton and Guillermo del Toro to glean from. The conniving Caligari (Werner Krauss) and silently menacing Cesare (Conrad



Veidt) are recognisable horror archetypes you'll have no doubt seen many times elsewhere.

By the time the still-shocking twist ending comes around, you'll likely be too enraptured by the story to remember that you've probably seen this all before. In spite of the ravages of time, *Dr Caligari* has lost nothing of its capacity to beguile and astonish.

Steve Wright

★★★★★

MORGAN

Inhuman nature

Details 12 // 92 mins // 2016 // **Released** Out now
Director Luke Scott **Cast** Anya Taylor-Joy, Kate Mara, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rose Leslie, Paul Giamatti **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



While this debut sci-fi thriller from Luke Scott doesn't quite hit the creative heights that you might have expected from it, it does possess a certain something that the son of Ridley has inherited at least part of the latter's talent.

Leading us through the eyes of jobsworth bureaucrat Lee (Kate Mara) as she heads to a secret government facility to oversee their experiment to create the perfect human specimen (Anya Taylor-Joy), it bears all the hallmarks of a cult hit in the making: it's quick to the action, has a great, albeit underused cast (Jennifer Jason Leigh, Paul Giamatti, Rose Leslie and Michelle Yeoh all rotate in and out), and has something to say.

However, the execution isn't always what it could be, which is ultimately what lets *Morgan* down. The final twist feels less like a genuine shock than it does an inevitability, and the climatic scenes leave you questioning whether it was all really worth it.

Steve Wright

★★★★★



DOCTOR MORDRID Strange-ly familiar

Details 15 // 74 mins // 1992 // **Released** Out now
Directors Albert Band, Charles Band **Cast** Jeffrey Combs, Yvette Nipar, Jay Acovone, Brian Thompson **Distributor** 88 Films



A cynic would say that prolific low-budget film distributors 88

Films picked up *Doctor Mordrid* in an attempt to cash in on the character's undeniable similarities to Stephen Strange – we wouldn't suggest anything of the kind, of course.

In all seriousness, this probably owes more to Lovecraft than Marvel – even down to its lead, *Re-Animator*'s Jeffrey Combs – such are the mystical overtones and pervading feeling of dread. Sadly, it falls far short of this touchstone, hampered by the clearly miniscule budget (a large part of which must have been squandered on the pointless stop-motion dinosaur-fight sequence) and



awful acting, particularly from main villain Brian Thompson.

Plus, it's suddenly all over before it has begun, and that the final battle takes place in a dreamscape while Mordrid is asleep next to a tree doesn't help this. Directors Albert and Charles Band turned out some decent enough thrillers in the early-to-mid Nineties, but this sadly isn't one of them.

Steve Wright
 ★★☆☆☆

RUPTURE Fear factor

Details 15 // 101 mins // 2016 // **Released** Out now
Director Steven Shainberg **Cast** Noomi Rapace, Peter Stormare, Kerry Bishé, Michael Chiklis, Ari Millen **Distributor** Signature Entertainment



Only the second film from Steven Shainberg in the 14 years since he

helmed *Secretary*, the release of *Rupture* comes with a certain amount of expectation.

Initially too, there are similarities: divorced single mother Renee (Noomi Rapace) gets put through hell by a cabal of mysterious kidnappers, who repeatedly force their prisoners to face their deepest fears – spiders in her case.

From there it's a competent enough suspense thriller, as we feel for Renee every step of the way, the intentions of her captors uncertain and her fate even less so, the more apparent it gets that Shainberg's intentions are pretty unconventional.

Ultimately, however, he seems more interested in the destination than the journey, as several plot holes and inconsistencies hamper things, and while we're fans of an ambiguous ending, it doesn't so much conclude as it does suddenly come to a close.

There's a really good film in there somewhere, but as it is, it feels like a short feature that hasn't quite made the step up.

Steve Wright
 ★★☆☆☆



THE GUYVER Alien invasion

Details 15 // 93 mins // 1991 // **Released** Out now **Director** Screaming Mad George, Steve Wang **Cast** Jack Armstrong, Mark Hamill, Greg Joung Paik, Vivian Wu **Distributor** Arrow Video



Very loosely based on Yoshiaki Takaya's Japanese manga series, *The Guyver* tells the tale of, well, the Guyver, the ancient name given to the being that dons the Guyver armour and is transformed into an alien-hybrid super soldier.

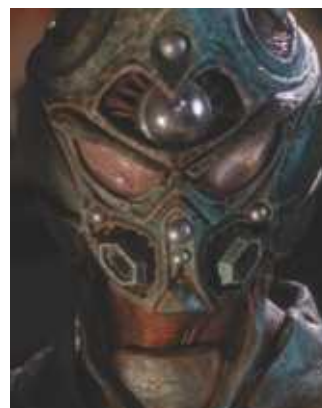
When CIA Agent Max Reed (Mark Hamill) witnesses the murder of a Chronos Corporation researcher, Dr Segawa (Greg Joung Paik), he finds himself pulled into a world of aliens and corruption, and ends up dragging Segawa's daughter, Mizuki (Vivian Wu), and her somewhat reluctant boyfriend along with him.

Almost everything about *The Guyver* is ridiculous, from the premise and the plot to the characters. There is probably some alternate universe in which the ridiculousness works, but it's not ours. Instead, it's pretty dull, and

can often feel like it's dragging even though it's only 93 minutes long. It tries too hard to be a weird sci-fi cult classic, but it only really succeeds when it comes to the 'weird' part.

However, it's still worth watching for the visual effects. For the most part they're extremely outdated, even for 1991, but they have somehow managed to retain all of the magic, particularly where the giant alien puppet heads are involved.

None of the puppets' mouths move in sync with the audio, and a couple don't move at all, but they are all easily cool enough for it not to matter too much. Directors Screaming Mad George and Steve Wang's backgrounds in special effects and make-up are evident and glorious. The attention to detail is astonishing, from the aliens' bloodshot eyes to their extra layers of glistening sweat that put the creatures just on the right side of grotesque.



But if puppets aren't really your thing and you're purely watching for Mark Hamill – whose name is splashed across the top of the home release cases, and whose face adorns most of the film's posters – you're going to be disappointed. He's neither the Guyver, nor really in it that much.

Poppy-Jay Palmer
 ★★☆☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Re-Animator
 A medical student gets caught up in reanimation experiments working on dead tissue.

SHOW INFO

Creators

Greg Berlanti, Marc Guggenheim, Andrew Kreisberg, Ali Adler, Geoff Johns, Phil Klemmer

Cast

Stephen Amell, Grant Gustin, Melissa Benoist, Brandon Routh, Carlos Valdes, Caity Lotz, Emily Bett Rickards, Victor Garber, Franz Drameh, Dominic Purcell, David Ramsey, Maisie Richardson-Sellers

Channel

Sky1

Running Time

126 mins



BEST TV CROSSOVERS

The Arrowverse did it the biggest, but who was it trying to best? Buffy/Angel

They did it a fair few times, in fact, but our personal favourite was *Angel* episode 'In The Dark', in which Spike goes to LA to retrieve the Gem of Amara from Angel. It's Spike at his finest before he turns into a bit of a stalker creeper vamp.

Doctor Who/Torchwood

Martha was mistreated continuously, but when she turned up for three episodes of *Torchwood*, she was a part of one of the spin-off's best arcs. She was given the opportunity to exist away from the Doctor, and we loved her so much more.

Star Trek/Star Trek

Spock appeared in various episodes of other *Trek* entities, and Spock Prime is obviously a key component of the Abrams films. Worf and O'Brien made their way into *DS9*, and many of the characters appeared in bit parts – over 30 occurred in total.

Bones/Sleepy Hollow

In what has to be the least likely crossover ever, *Bones* and *Sleepy Hollow* had a ludicrous (but entertaining) pair of episodes in Halloween 2015 in which Abbie and Ichabod helped Booth and Brennan with some grisly remains, and then the Anthropologist and Agent assisted with forensics, just 'cause.



THE ARROWVERSE 'INVASION!'

Superfun or superdud?

The CW crossover event was hyped beyond belief before it even happened, but did it deliver? Last year's *Arrow/The Flash* crossover that set up *Legends Of Tomorrow* fell a bit flat in our eyes, so did this year match up?

Well, yes and no. The episode of *Supergirl*, while superb in its own right (Thanksgiving, alien virus, near-death experiences, excellent parental love) was hardly a part of the crossover, with Barry (Grant Gustin) and Cisco (Carlos Valdes) only appearing for about 20 seconds at the end of the episode – a moment that is repeated in *The Flash*.

Forgoing the current big day of the season, *The Flash* (★★★★★) is by far the strongest of the four. Setting up our heroes in a fight against an alien threat, Barry and Cisco – who is still bearing an increasingly annoying grudge against Barry for the Flashpoint events – travel to Earth-38 to enlist Kara (Melissa Benoist) and assemble the rest of the not-Avengers.

In a more serious version of short film 'Superhero Fight Club' – a recommended watch for Diggle's (David Ramsey) reaction to Martian Manhunter (David Harewood) alone – the heroes, legends and vigilantes all face off against Kara to test their

abilities. It's amusing, but in the end doesn't help. Most of them end up whammied by the aliens and trying to kill Oliver (Stephen Amell) and Barry. Once they get knocked out of it and are ready to team up against the aliens, Oliver, Diggle, Sara (Caity Lotz), Ray (Brandon Routh) and Thea (Willa Holland) are abducted.

Our only quibble is that *everyone* seems to be ragging at Barry because of Flashpoint – a world they didn't even know. Yes, he was selfish, but he's been punished enough by Cisco.

Moving on to *Arrow*'s 100th episode (★★★★★), Oliver and company wake up in a dream world where he never became the Green Arrow. He's about to marry Laurel (Katie Cassidy), his parents are alive, as is Tommy (insert an in-joke about actor Colin Donnell's role on *Chicago Med*), Diggle is the Arrow and Felicity is engaged to Ray.

Each of the dreaming five see flashes of what the world should be like – no Laurel, Oliver being the Green Arrow, Sara an assassin, and Ray knowing that Felicity wasn't his fiancée. In any other scenario this would have been a great way to spend a 100th instalment, but following what was a well-paced and enjoyable episode of *The Flash*, this just doesn't fit. Even if the aliens are making it happen, it seems a bit out of place.

While the rest of Team Arrow/Flash and the Legends aren't in the dream state, they seem to need to steal and hack a piece of alien technology, create some new code, and do some other risky activities to find out that the aliens have taken them into space.

Would that not be your first guess? Our favourite thing about the episode has to be Barry and Kara trying to convince Wild Dog (Rick Gonzalez) that not all metas and aliens are bad – though it does only take about five seconds for him to change his mind.

Legends Of Tomorrow (★★★★★) picks up the pace, but doesn't match the quality of *The Flash*. Previously ignored characters (Vixen and Steel in particular) get more to do, but by taking Cisco and Felicity back in time they end up making things worse. At least Cisco finally gets a reality check and forgives Barry. We find out that the aliens are here because of Flashpoint, and want Barry, so naturally he goes to sacrifice himself, because Oliver "and what army?" are going to stop him? (the other million superheroes that are currently in that hangar, perhaps?).

Mostly, the crossover suffers from being over-stuffed. Kara doesn't seem to get much to do (bar one moment where she shows that she's the one you do not want to want to cross) to the point that it's almost pointless her being there – apart from her being the best thing about it, of course.

It's a shame, because it had the potential to be amazing, but the decision to cram so much in backfires. In the meantime, we're looking forward to the *Supergirl/Flash* musical crossover instead.

Jen Neal

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Gotham

It's the only DC superhero show you've not seen if you watch all four of these, and it's good fun!



THE HALL OF JUSTICE – THE HQ OF THE SUPER FRIENDS FROM THE ORIGINAL JUSTICE LEAGUE ANIMATED SERIES – CAN BE SEEN IN THE FLASH.

DONNIE DARKO

I don't recall him ever mentioning a rabbit...

Details 15 // 113 mins // 2001 //  **Released** Out now

Director Richard Kelly **Cast** Jake Gyllenhaal, Jena Malone, Mary McDonnell, Holmes Osborne, Patrick Swayze **Distributor** Arrow Video



It's hard not to wince when a film is given the 'cult movie' label as soon as it's released, but Richard Kelly's debut feature earned it. And like many films that were important to you as a teenager, there's that fear of revisiting it.

With this restoration box set, Arrow has given us the chance to go back to both the acclaimed theatrical version and the generally reviled director's cut, and our opinions are the same as they ever were.

For the uninitiated, *Donnie Darko* is set in October 1988, as the titular troubled high-school kid (Jake Gyllenhaal) begins to have visions of a man-sized rabbit named Frank (James Duval) telling him the world is coming to an end. Is Donnie losing his mind, or is life hurtling towards a terrifying and inevitable conclusion?

This polished re-release shows that Kelly's first effort remains an accomplished genre-bender that crams big SF ideas, heartbreaking drama and giddy Eighties nostalgia (predating that current trend by a good decade) into its 113-minute running time with a confidence and wit that still impresses.

Anchored by a star-making turn from Gyllenhaal, it floats past every possible pitfall (and there are many) to deliver something that still stuns. All its many frantically fizzing ideas work so beautifully in tandem to create a unique and powerful atmosphere, as Donnie's doom-laden conversation with Frank while watching *Evil Dead* sits perfectly alongside Sparkle Motion's big show.

The director's cut shows how fragile the film is by pretty much destroying it. Every moment of added exposition, every song change,



SCENES
Must
see now!



every god damn book page, takes a wrecking ball to this perfectly formed marvel. The theatrical cut is a modern masterpiece, and we can't let this review end without singling out Mary McDonnell's superb performance as Donnie's bitchin' mother Mary. "It feels wonderful."

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Southland Tales
Kelly's sophomore effort has moments of brilliance, even if it is an unwieldy mess.

DON'T BREATHE

Cat and mouse burglary

Details 15 // 88 mins // 2016 //  **Released** 16 January

Director Fede Alvarez **Cast** Stephen Lang, Jane Levy, Dylan Minnette, Daniel Zovatto **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



It has been a good year for horror at the box office, and one of the heaviest

hitters was the sophomore effort from *Evil Dead* remake director Fede Alvarez, who squeezed every drop of tension possible from his reverse home-invasion horror.

Jane Lynch is compelling as Rocky, one of three young thieves out to rob a blind war veteran (Stephen Lang) who is sitting on a huge stash of cash. But once they're inside, they realise that they've bitten off more than they can chew.

After the doors are shut and Lang's relentless veteran is awake and upset, Alvarez shows that he's got an incredible gift for pushing the viewer to the edge of their



seat. He and co-writer Rodo Sayagues keep finding a way to wrong-foot the viewer, with a combination of jump scares and some gruesome surprises.

Lang is an absolutely terrifying presence, and even though the final twist ended up splitting audiences, this is a truly gripping piece of horror that we can highly recommend.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

SCENES
Must
see now!

THE CHURCH

Vault of horror

Details 18 // 102 mins // 1989 //  **Released** Out now

Director Michele Soavi **Cast** Hugh Quarshie, Tomas Arana, Feodor Chaliapin Jr, Barbara Cupisti, Asia Argento **Distributor** Shameless



As the man behind genre masterpiece *Dellamorte*

Dellamore, Michele Soavi will always have a very special place in our hearts.

In 1989, he teamed up with Dario Argento for a film that he declared wasn't a *Demons* sequel, although you may well have watched it as such. While it's not his best work, there is something lovable about this blend of claustrophobic dread, religious history nonsense and outrageous grot.

A cathedral is built on the mass grave of villagers murdered under suspicion of witchcraft. Obviously, there's a terrifying curse waiting to explode from the vaults below to unleash all manner of nightmarish sex demons.

Soavi creates a feverish atmosphere inside the church, and fans should enjoy the delirious schlock once it gets going. It is a strange beast, though, and it feels as though no one involved could quite decide what they were going for. It's fun, with a couple of stand-out moments, but perhaps approach with caution.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★





Season Three

AGENTS OF SHIELD

Back to square one

Details TBC // 960 mins // DVD // 30 January **Creators** Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancher **Cast** Clark Gregg, Ming-Na Wen, Chloe Bennet, Brett Dalton, Iain De Caestecker, Elizabeth Henstridge, Luke Mitchell **Distributor** 2entertain



It's starting to feel like *Agents Of SHIELD* is going back to its roots – in the sense that it's becoming harder and harder to care.

The takeover of SHIELD that ran from the second half of Season One to basically all of Season Two was captivating and action-packed, and made for great comfort sci-fi television. Now we've got all this Inhumans stuff going on with Daisy (Chloe Bennet) and Lincoln (Luke Mitchell), and it's clearer now why Marvel Studios decided to ditch the *Inhumans* movie.

The season's stand-out episode has to be '4,722 Hours', which tells us what Simmons (Elizabeth Henstridge) got up to while she was trapped on a deserted planet after being dragged through the portal at the end of Season Two. It's bleak and gripping, reminiscent of Fifties sci-fi thrillers.

The finale, 'Ascension', isn't bad either. *Agents Of SHIELD*



has become very good at letting us down and then whipping out a great season finale to ensure that we'll be popping back next season, if to only find out what happens next.

There are also a couple of new additions to the team, including Joey Gutierrez (Juan Pablo Raba) and Elena 'Yo-Yo' Rodriguez (Natalia Cordova-Buckley). Unfortunately, neither of them have much bearing.

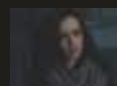
Gutierrez was clearly included in an attempt to make the ensemble less overwhelmingly heterosexual, and has ended up becoming 'the gay guy' because there's literally nothing else memorable about him. Likewise, Yo-Yo often feels like she's only there to show off her super-speed power. Seriously, zero effort has gone into fleshing out these new recruits.

When it comes to the old SHIELD team, no one really wows this season. Everyone has remained consistent, which is a positive, we guess. Clark Gregg as Coulson is always good value.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Jessica Jones
A private investigator gets into trouble when an old foe comes to town.

HUMANS I, Robots

Details 15 // 225 mins // DVD // 16 January **Creators** Sam Vincent, Jonathan Brackley **Cast** Emily Berrington, Colin Morgan, Gemma Chan, Carrie-Anne Moss, Katherine Parkinson, Tom Goodman-Hill **Distributor** Spirit Entertainment Ltd



Humans has

constantly been fighting an uphill battle. While in its first series it was following in the footsteps of the brilliant and unfairly cancelled *Utopia*, Series Two saw it running at the same time as HBO's no-expense-spared take on *Westworld*.

Yet while the latter has been undeniably excellent, it has also proved worryingly easy for fans to decipher on fan forums. The same accusation is impossible to level at *Humans*: wherever you thought it was heading in the wake of the breath-clenching Series One finale, it's likely that your expectations would have been upended in more ways than one.

While it takes some time to get going – episodes one and two are all about setting the scene – once it does, the narrative's various strands clash with inexorable force. With increasing numbers of Synths gaining consciousness, the title takes on a whole new meaning, with core artificial cast members Leo (Colin Morgan), Max (Ivanhoe) (Jeremiah), Anita (Gemma Chan) and Niska (Emily Berrington) serving as the series' moral core, the Hawkins family becoming increasingly bemused onlookers, and Carrie-Anne Moss's Dr Athena Morrow automatically being assigned villainous duties, despite her tragic back story.



SCREEN NOW
Must see now!

Everything builds towards a fittingly dramatic finale, all the while creators Sam Vincent and Jonathan Brackley have a lot of fun playing with their universe, throwing in a number of interesting ideas in the process. Some work (the addition of humans who choose to live as Synths is a particularly creative development), while others (Niska's attempts to be tried as a human) don't really go anywhere.

Helping matters is the uniformly great cast. Scaled back slightly this season, there isn't a weak link to be found, but some don't get the time they warrant (Neil Maskell's DS Pete Drummond is one such casualty).

For all its obvious inspirations, *Humans* still somehow feels unlike anything else we've ever seen. And we can't think of higher praise than that.

Steve Wright

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Westworld
An accidental companion show, HBO's latest success story is no less brilliant.



Series Two

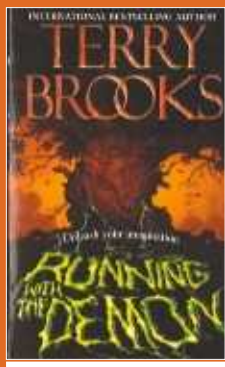
⁸²Charlie Adlard

The Walking Dead artist and new
Comics Laureate on what's next



74 Need to Read: The Word And Void trilogy **76** Beginner's Guide: Cyberpunk
78 Book Reviews **84** Graphic Novel Reviews

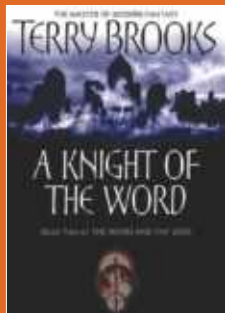
Adlard 112



The Word And Void trilogy

Author: Terry Brooks
Published: 1997-99
Publisher: Orbit

Taking place thousands of years before the events of *The Sword Of Shannara*, two magic-wielders – teenager Nest Freemark, and wizard John Ross – join forces in the battle between the magical Word and the demonic hordes of the Void.



Need to Read The Word And Void trilogy

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

Famous for his Shannara books, we'd rate his Word And Void series as a true representation of Terry Brooks' best writing....



© Niccolò Caranti

Continuations of popular novels have a tendency to be problematic. No matter how good they are, they can never claim to be 'quite' like

the original, and they will always be fighting against its reputation.

In the case of Terry Brooks, author of the original *Shannara* trilogy – beginning in 1977 with *The Sword Of Shannara*, then followed in 1982 and 1985 by *The Elfstones Of Shannara* and *The Wishsong Of Shannara* respectively – he had a particularly tough act to follow. Having already continued the saga with his four-book *Heritage Of Shannara* series – set 200 years after the original trilogy – and one-shot prequel *First King Of Shannara*, a question was posed: where to go next?

The answer, as it turned out, was a simple one: right back to the very beginning. Back to a time before elves and dwarves were commonplace, and before wizards and demons fought each other – at least in public. The war was very much going on in *Running With The Demon*, which saw Knight of the Word, John Ross, do battle with the hell-spawned forces that lurked in the shadows, threatening to spread their dark stain upon the Earth.

Draped over this was the trapping of a coming-of-age story. Set in the fictional location of Hopewell – modelled on Brooks' own hometown of Sterling, Illinois – it also follows 14-year-old series co-protagonist Nest Freemark, a possessor of magical powers who combines her homework with guarding her local park, which happens to be a haven for shadowy demonic creatures known as 'feeders'.

This may essentially sound like *Buffy* in book form, but the similarities

end here. There's no chilling down the Bronze after a night's slaying for Nest. An orphan who lives with her grandparents and has no real knowledge of her father, the shocking final-act revelation regarding the true nature of her parentage takes this well outside of kooky YA territory, and brings us back full circle to the apocalyptic fantasy that Brooks made his name with.

As the series progresses into sequel *A Knight Of The Word* and trilogy closer *Angel Fire East*, things only get darker. Both Nest and John try and fail to live normal lives – the former to get married and compete in the Olympics,

IT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE "ULTIMATE PREQUEL" TO THE SHANNARA SERIES

and the latter as a volunteer – but both are drawn back to the battle between the Word and the Void, which John's increasingly apocalyptic nightmares show to be a never-ending struggle.

Tragedy pervades every step of the *Word And Void* trilogy. While its relationship to the *Shannara* series wasn't initially made clear, it has since been described as its "ultimate prequel", which serves to give it much more dramatic weight: even if Nest and John win this battle, humanity ultimately loses the war, and the constant presence of demons like the conniving Findo Gask and supernatural figures like mysterious Native American shaman O'olish Amaneh are nicely underplayed, hinting at there being much more to the story than meets the eye without

ever fully revealing it – and doing so in the tradition of the best the genre has to offer.

Yet even in darkness, there is hope. While trilogy concluser *Angel Fire East* ends in tragedy, the battle is not lost – at least not completely. As long as there are people willing to fight in the corner of good, then there will still be goodness in the world, no matter how much people try to snuff it out. Not to over-egg things, but we could all use a little optimism in our lives, and Brooks is careful to provide this even amid all the darkness that shrouds this series.

Brooks never claims to be a natural author, once saying, "I never knew it was possible to rewrite so much prose and not go insane", but the *Word & Void* trilogy appears to belie this attitude: the writing contained within its pages belong to an author who has made a home for himself within the world he has created, and is having great fun doing so. Indeed, this year saw him release *The Sorcerer's Daughter*, the 28th *Shannara* entry, so it's clear that the satisfaction he gains from continuing the saga is very much akin to the joy we have in reading his work.

As for the future? As recently as May 2016 in an interview with us, Brooks revealed that the possibility of adapting the *Word And Void* trilogy in some form has been mooted, saying enigmatically, "We're talking about doing something with that at some point." MTV's approach to *The Shannara Chronicles* wouldn't be a good fit for his prequel series, but we retain hope that it will be realised in some form some day.

In the meantime, we will always have the books – and we couldn't be happier.

The *Word And Void* trilogy by Terry Brooks are available to buy now, published by Orbit.

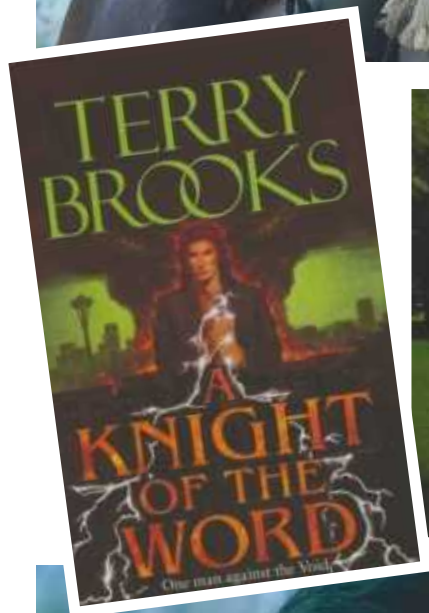


The trilogy takes place millennia before the events of *Shannara*.



Have a Need
To Read you want
us to tackle?

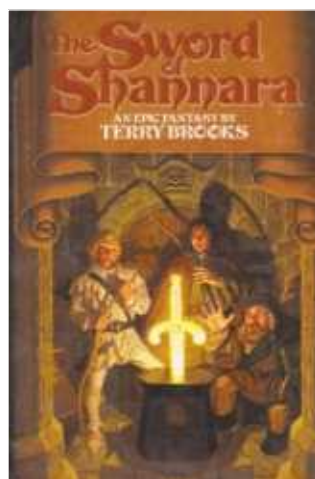
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook
#NeedToRead #BookClub



Sterling, Illinois – the inspiration for the fictional setting of Hopewell.



We could see the *Word And Void* trilogy working as an adaptation.



Try next

Life after the *Word & Void*

Armageddon's Children (2006)



The bridge between the *Word And Void* and *Shannara* series, this follows Hawk, a distant descendant of Nest who continues the fight in a world that has been ravaged by nuclear war thanks to the machinations of the Void.

Assassin's Apprentice (1995)



Like Brooks, Robin Hobb possesses her own fantasy universe in the form of *The Realm Of The Elderlings*. Start here for the first step in the story of Royal bastard FitzChivalry.

The Secret Hour (2004)



Endorsed by Ursula K Le Guin, this high praise shouldn't be overlooked. The first book in the *Midnighters* series from Scott Westerfield introduces us to a group of high-schoolers who fight the forces of darkness – an existence that somehow becomes even more complicated thanks to a mysterious newcomer.

The Passage (2010)



Justin Cronin's dystopian epic – another trilogy starter – is a towering achievement, and bears heavy similarities with Brooks' work, most notably in its protagonist Amy, who is forcibly bestowed with powers while the world changes beyond recognition around her.

The Running Game (2013)



A paranormal thriller set in a dystopian future London, its protagonist, Rachel, is another dynamic heroine, forced into a desperate battle for survival in a world that is strangely familiar. Author LE Fitzpatrick's sequel, *Border Lines*, will be on sale by the time you read this.



Which sub-genre do you want us to tackle next?

Let us know on Twitter or Facebook #BookClub



A Beginner's Guide To Cyberpunk

Start prepping for the technological age

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Arguably the coolest-named sub-genre in sci-fi literature, cyberpunk has been going strong since the Eighties. It's idealistic and dystopian, progressive and regressive, and it equally represents both what we do and do not want the future to be. It also had a huge impact on so much of modern culture, from music and art to architecture.

Nova Express, the Hugo-nominated sci-fi fanzine established in 1987, defined cyberpunk characters as being "marginalised, alienated loners who lived on the edge of society in generally dystopic futures where daily life was impacted by rapid technological change." In the world of cyberpunk, technology is king. It controls society, personality, motivation and, well, everything.

Extreme advances in technology and research rarely lead to anything good. Browsing through the cyberpunk section of your local booksellers (if they even exist), you will find that only a very small handful represent the near-future technological age in a utopian light.

More often than not, stories revolve around societies that function on a 'high-tech, low-life' basis, with the protagonists often existing as wanted hackers and

data dealers, bottom-of-the-barrel employees for diabolical mega corporations, and artificial intelligences just trying to feel human. Pile an emphasis on radical changes in social order and mechanical body enhancements on the top of all that, and you've got yourself a pretty by-the-book cyberpunk premise.

William Gibson, the author of the 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, is often

seen as one of the founding figures of cyberpunk, but foundations of the genre can be seen in a fair few novels published before then, including the likes of Philip K Dick's *Do Android's Dream Of Electric Sheep* (1968) and Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965). In their eras they were viewed more as speculative sci-fi fiction, but everything from their settings to their ideals have helped inform and shape the cyberpunk genre.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, STORIES REVOLVE AROUND SOCIETIES THAT FUNCTION ON A 'HIGH-TECH, LOW-LIFE' BASIS



Cyberpunk futures are more advanced – but not necessarily better off.

Classic Cyberpunk tropes

Mega corporations

\$\$\$ No matter the problem, a mega corporation is usually at the bottom of it – and it's never down to a simple administration error. Whatever is done is through malice by faceless bosses in expensive suits for massive heaps of cash.

Genetically enhanced mercenaries

⚙️ Why hire a regular mercenary when you can have one that has been genetically enhanced almost into oblivion? As well as being as cool as hell, this trope also allows for them to be defeated by technical issues when a dying story is in need of a get-out clause.

Anti-heroes

🐱 One of the best/most repetitive (delete as appropriate) things about cyberpunk stories with central characters is that no one is squeaky clean. The heroes always have a dark side and an even more murky past. Nobody can brood quite like a cyberpunk 'hero'.



Brain freeze

Missing-data imputation

NEUROMANCER
Author: William Gibson
Publisher: Harper Voyager
Published: 1984
Price: £8.99

As a seminal work in the world of cyberpunk, newbies should start with *Neuromancer* as a genre gateway. The novel begins with Henry Dorsett Case, an out-of-work hacker and low-level hustler, who is contacted by a mysterious new potential employer and persuaded to carry out a number of data-orientated crimes. Character arcs exploring drug use and depression make *Neuromancer* a very human story set in an unbelievable futuristic world.

“Favourite’s got to be *Neuromancer*, the original and best.”
@dOugalmcfrugal



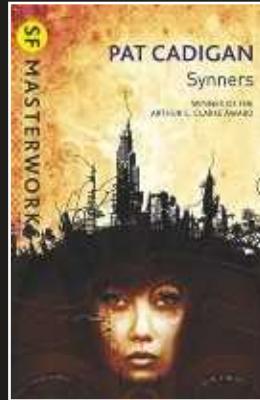
Virtually reality

I want a new drug

SNOW CRASH
Author: Neal Stephenson
Publisher: Penguin
Published: 1992
Price: £8.99

The Metaverse acts as the virtual reality setting for Neal Stephenson’s third novel. A successor to the Internet, it serves as a second home to avatars and software daemons all over the world. But when *Snow Crash*, a brand new cyberdrug, comes into the picture, things start to hit the fan; as it turns out, it also affects the person behind the avatar, causing it to start to bleed out into reality. We would classify it as a modern classic, and it is definitely an essential read for all genre fans.

“It’s fast, it’s furious, it’s got a protagonist called Protagonist and a spear-throwing villain! What’s not to love?” @eriknoomen



Saints and sinners

Always on my mind

SYNNERS
Author: Pat Cadigan
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 2012
Price: £8.99

Technology can be extremely useful up to a certain point. But too many new inventions and apparently innovative solutions mean that the line between tech and humanity can start to blur. Pat Cadigan’s novel explores this idea and then some, as new technology begins to fuse with the human mind, spawning crime and suffering. It’s novels like *Synners* that have transformed Cadigan into a mainstay of the cyberpunk movement.

“I’m reading *Synners*, and it is crazy good. Should be just as well known to the mainstream as William Gibson in my opinion” @SamMcIntosh



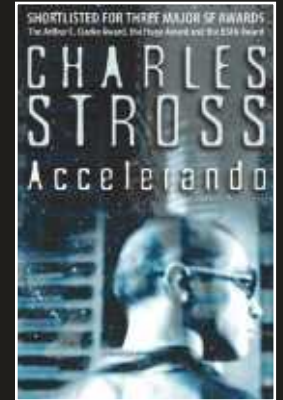
Body swap

Dead man walking

ALTERED CARBON
Author: Richard Morgan
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 2002
Price: £9.99

For those looking for a bit more action and violence, *Altered Carbon* is a must-read. As a hard-boiled cyberpunk novel, it takes conventions from crime noir and futuristic SF and fuses them into a cyber-casserole. Set 400 years on in interstellar space, human consciousness is digitally freighted between stars and downloaded into random bodies. When Takeshi Kovacs is posited into the body of an ex-thug, he begins to investigate who murdered his last one.

“An old favourite now but still never fails to impress! Wish he’d add to the series!” @lanternman



Posthuman

Too much information

ACCELERANDO
Author: Charles Stross
Publisher: Orbit
Published: 2006
Price: £10.99

In the early 21st century, the world is a post-human place. The recession has ended, technology is constantly accelerating, and our kind have mostly been replaced by artificial intelligences. Struggling to survive in the age of bio- and nanotechnology, intelligence dealer Manfred Macx attempts to make a living by spreading ideas from one person to another. He’s at the forefront of the technological revolution, but even Manfred can only take on so much information.

“VERY post humanist, all about uploading consciousness to hard drives. Good read.” @topher1kenobe



The genre sees characters' lives forever altered by technology.



Your Top 5 Siblings in Genre Fiction

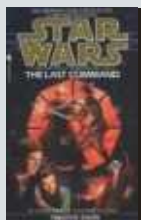
CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. A Long Way To A Small Angry Planet

"Kizzy and Jenks. They're not blood relatives

but are self-appointed siblings.
#BookClub" @PasmineJalmer



2. The Last Command

"The Solo twins. The dichotomy of personalities was well designed and written in both

regular and young adult sci-fi.
#BookClub" @DanielSWos



3. A Wrinkle in Time

"Meg & Charles Wallace Murry in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Genius and heroism personified.

#BookClub" @JaycenWise



4. Dragon Keeper

"Selden and Malta Vestrit, *Rain Wild Chronicles*: kickass elderling power siblings, sassing dragons together.

#BookClub" @HayleyElise



5. Fullmetal Alchemist

"Elric Brothers from *Fullmetal Alchemist* – two brothers sacrificing themselves for the other over the backdrop of magic genocide.

#BookClub" @AHDPodcast

Details Author: Stephanie Garber Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton Price: £12.99 Released: 31 January

CARAVAL

A magnificent feast for the senses

In her debut novel, Stephanie Garber has created an enchanting carnival of dreams and nightmares that is beautifully and vividly written. She takes you on a magical coming-of-age expedition about sisterly love that is paved with peril and sacrifice, but is also deliciously romantic. There's a vibrancy and rich detail to Garber's turn of phrase that is so transporting you can almost smell, taste and feel the marvellous things she describes.

Two sisters, Donatella and Scarlett Dagna, have been living on the Isle of Trisda since birth, having never left. They dream of taking to the seas to participate in a dangerous game called Caraval. Their father

is a brutal man who exerts cruel punishments on them both for daring to break his rules. When he catches the wild and reckless Donatella cavorting with a sailor named Julian, he reprimands Scarlett for her behaviour.

Unknown to him, Scarlett has, after years of yearning, finally been invited to take part in the game by the Master Legend who extends the invite to her sister and an anonymous guest. The winner will be granted the prize of a wish, which is something Donatella refuses to let her sister decline due to her upcoming nuptials with a suitor she has never met. In cahoots with Julian, she instead

kidnaps Scarlett, and all three take part in the game.

A huge part of the novel deals with the theme of what it's like to lose faith after something or someone you truly love is taken away from you. The game involves Scarlett searching for her sister who has been hidden away from her, which in turn sees her strive for independence and have to learn to trust her instincts and overcome her greatest fears.

The bond between the sisters is beautifully portrayed, and when they are parted from one another a great sense of unease and urgency is wonderfully conveyed – so much so that the journey to reunite them makes this a gripping and tremendously moving page-turner. The steampunk fashion fuses wonderfully with the mystery of Scarlett's adventure as she is tasked with solving five clues in order to locate her sister.

There are hints of Shakespeare's *Taming Of The Shrew* here, but the ugliness of training a woman into obedience is upended through Scarlett's evolution. Instead, this is all about taking the patriarchy down, and has a similar spirited approach to that text as Gil Junger's 1999 film *10 Things I Hate About You* does. Garber also takes lead from *As You Like It*, literally placing her players on a giant artificial stage where they are invited to take part or observe, and she conjures up a grand feeling of melancholy throughout.

Early on in the novel, Scarlett enters a clock shop that sports a banner, claiming, "Its proprietor could fix broken imaginations." It's a clue pointing to what this is about, and by the time the final chapter comes about it serves as a wonderful reminder of the voyage Garber has taken both her characters and the reader on. Her story of courage and the importance of battling on despite disillusionment is exquisitely crafted.

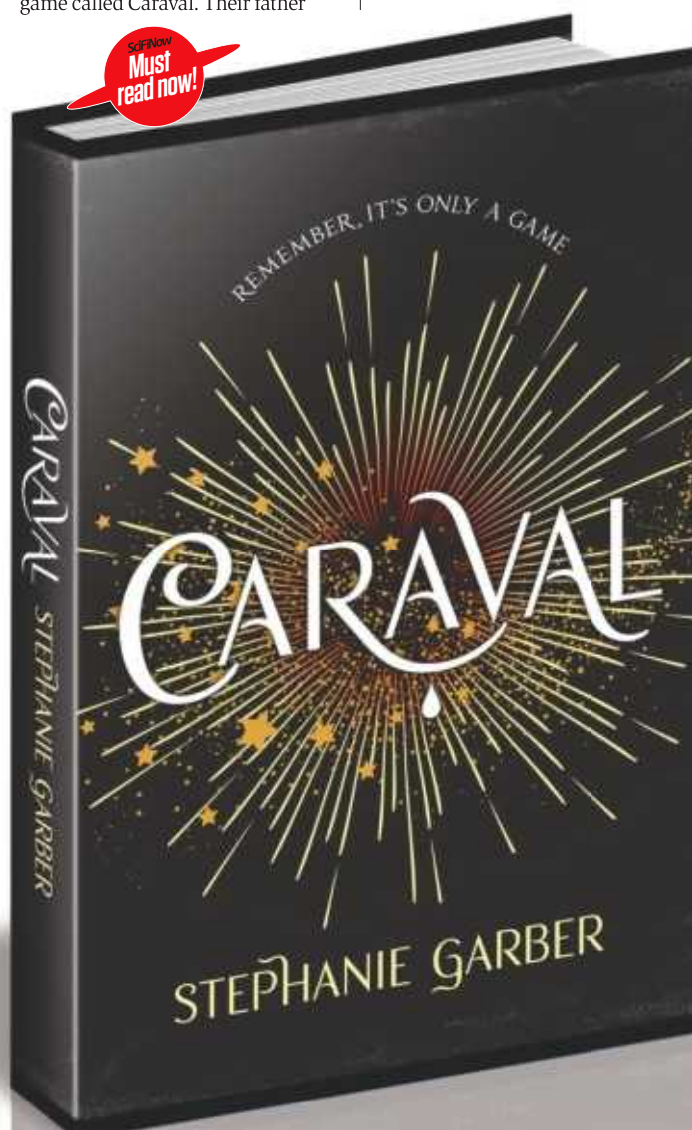
Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Night Circus
Erin Morgenstern
A love story of two illusionists that enter a dangerous competition at a circus.



Details Authors: Brian Jay Jones/Carrie Fisher **Publisher:** Headline/Bantam **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

GEORGE LUCAS: A LIFE/ THE PRINCESS DIARIST

A long time ago...

Star Wars has moved beyond classic status and into institution territory, but the story behind its creation – which can be charitably described as ‘chaotic’ – proves to be the gift that keeps on giving.

Good biographies uncover new sides to their subject matter beyond the headlines and clickbait, and

Brian Jay Jones manages the feat here with *George Lucas: A Life* (★★★★★), which traces his roots from a car-crashing cad in Modesto, California, to his gradual rise to superstardom. Along the way, we witness his friendships with figures like John Milius, Walter Murch, Francis Ford Coppola and Steven Spielberg, and rise from Hollywood-baiting avant-garde filmmaker to blockbuster director.

Post-prequel trilogy, Lucas’s name has become a bit of a punchline, but here great lengths are gone to in order to redress the balance. His pivotal role in challenging the Hollywood power structure, paving the way for younger filmmakers, is underlined, as is the extent to which Industrial Light & Magic revolutionised cinematic visual effects while Lucas closely watched over it. By the time it’s done you might think differently of him.

Carrie Fisher’s *The Princess Diarist* (★★★★★) has hit the headlines thanks to the revelation of the writer’s relationship with co-star Harrison Ford on the set of *A New Hope* – but there’s a far more interesting story to be found: one of a young actress thrust into the limelight, her private recollections shining a light on her insecurities.

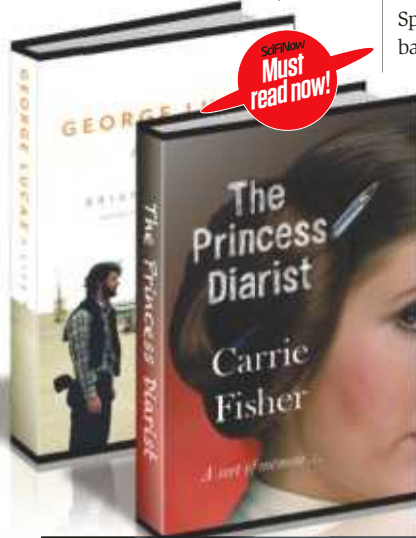
As talented a writer as she is an actress, topics range from the borderline creepy attentions of her male co-workers, to her thoughts on the phenomenon of fan conventions and her continuing legacy.

Both Lucas and Fisher are treasures – if you weren’t sure of that before then you will be by the time you’re done.

Steve Wright

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Easy Riders, Raging Bulls
Peter Biskind
Read more about the escapades of Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola and co.



SciFiNow
Must read now!

Details Author: James Islington **Publisher:** Orbit **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

INK

Written on the body

How much do you share about yourself on Facebook? Your birthday? Who you’re related to? Your job, school, and favourite band? There’s nothing wrong with that, but what if you had to make all your information public? And what if you could never change any of it again?

That’s the situation the teen heroine of *Ink* finds herself in. In Leora’s culture, every detail of a person’s life, from their family tree to their chosen profession, is tattooed onto them – a person’s skin tells their life story. But when Leora’s father dies, she discovers there was more to him than she knew, and that not all tattoos are permanent.

You can tick off the familiar YA tropes already. There’s an awkward heroine, a troubled love interest and a dead parent, and the story fits neatly into the

coming-of-age mould. But what sets *Ink* apart from its peers is its smart use of mythology. It’s a story about storytelling, and the ways in which a well-told tale can change the world.

Debut author Alice Broadway borrows folklore from many different cultures to give her world a complex and colourful background – it’s beguiling. The way Broadway pushes her reader to interpret her fairy tales is immensely satisfying.

It’s also refreshing that she lets Leora make mistakes. She’s not always a likable heroine, but she’s a relatable one, and even her bad decisions make sense. The book ends on a moment of triumph and terror so jaw-dropping that it seems set to inspire a few real-world tattoos.

Sarah Dobbs

★★★★★

SciFiNow
Must read now!



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Fire Sermon
Francesca Haig
Another YA fantasy that splits society in two: blessed and cursed. The trick is telling them apart.



YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



“The Children Of Húrin – great read whilst I’ve been in Iceland. #BookClub”
@JoshisButler90



“Necroscope IV: DeadSpeak by Brian Lumley. Had this for years but only just got round to it. Excellent series of books #Wamphyr #BookClub”
@Redjack69



“I’ve just finished A Closed And Common Orbit by Becky Chambers... #BookClub”
@johntheboy



“1/3 thru @ Angela Slater incredible VIGIL, a fantasy detective story set in Brisbane Aus. Best book I’ve read this year! #BookClub”
@indianamulder



“The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri and it’s a pure masterpiece. #BookClub”
@ChristinaArchr



“I am being very festive and reading A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, it’s wonderful! #BookClub”
@BeardedWhovian



“I’m currently reading Shadows Of Self by @Brand Sanderson and loving every second #BookClub”
@reading_escape



“Re-reading A Game Of Thrones. One of the greatest fantasy epics. #BookClub”
Jbarnes532



Ready Player One, a must-read for gamers of the eighties. #BookClub
@TheWriteSF

Tell us what you’re reading on Twitter or Facebook  



60 SECONDS WITH



GX TODD

Could you briefly describe the story of *Defender*?

Many people are dead. The voices inside their heads made them do it. A survivor called Pilgrim, who hears a voice of his own, meets a girl who desperately wants to find her sister. Between them stands 600 miles of dangerous roads and the paranoid people who travel them, where anyone could be hiding a voice that wants to slaughter them. BOOM.

What's the biggest challenge when creating a post-apocalyptic setting?

I made the decision early on that I didn't want to write about an apocalypse as and when it happened; other authors have done it far better than I ever could. I was more interested in looking at the world and its survivors in the years afterwards, both in their new physical environment and their new psychological one; if they lived and interacted, seeing if they had overcome the worst parts of their nature or whether they had succumbed to them.

It's actually very cathartic to rid the world of civilisation and technology. It simplifies things a great deal, giving you a clean slate to work from. The most challenging task is keeping all those aspects contained in a largely believable setup.

How important was the library sequence to you?

Incredibly. Even if my characters turn out to be the crappiest people in the world, if they read for pleasure then there's always a hope they can be redeemed. Books and libraries have played such a pivotal role in my life, they're like my lifeblood. They will always find their way into my stories one way or another. I can't help myself.

Defender by GX Todd is out now, published by Headline.



Details Author: Jeff Giles Publisher: Bloomsbury Price: £7.99 Released: 9 February

THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING

Through hell and high water

After the death of her father, Zoe's family is falling apart. Her mother works every hour to try and keep them afloat, while her little brother Jonah struggles to adjust to their new reality.

X has been tormented all his life. Damned to the hellish Lowlands ruled by the cruel Lords, he is condemned to life as a Bounty Hunter harvesting the wicked from the mortal world. On one mission, he stumbles across Zoe and Jonah. Will this meeting give them both a shot at salvation?

This is the debut novel of journalist Jeff Giles. The Young Adult genre has boomed in the last ten years, and with this book Giles has crafted an energetic engaging story that could easily spin out into a series and stand alongside the likes of James Dashner and co.

The story is told from the perspectives of Zoe and X. From the off, the love story

element of the plot is original.

However, Giles does a really good job of alleviating the more teenage angsty moments, with a witty remark making them enjoyable and fun to read.

The thing that sold this book was not the budding relationship between Zoe and X, but the vibrant world that has been created with some great, well rounded supporting characters. Zoe's brother Jonah is such a lovable character whose loss and suffering is felt far beyond his years. There is honesty in the rawness of his emotions that is relatable on every level.

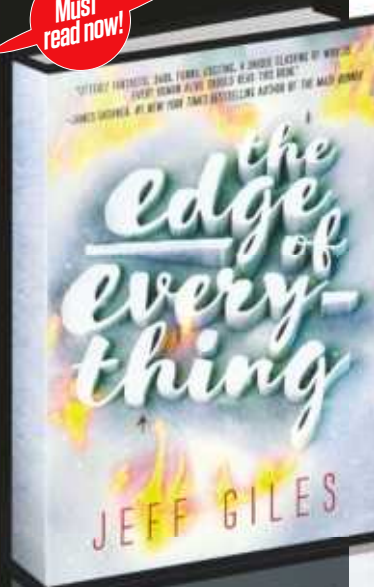
Then there are X's fellow Bounty Hunters, whose back stories are fed in dribs and drabs, and we begin to hope that there is a chance of redemption for them.

Giles has created a unique world with wonderful characters who sell themselves to sequels.

Amy Martin

★★★★★

ScifiNow
Must read now!



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Maze Runner
James Dashner
Set in a post-apocalyptic future, Thomas and his friends must solve the maze before all is lost.

Details Author: Peter S Beagle Publisher: Tachyon Price: £16.24 Released: 1 February

IN CALABRIA

Bringing back hope

In Calabria tells the tale of the grumpy Bianchi, who has lost things throughout his life and barricaded himself in his farm to ensure he doesn't lose any more. He talks to his animals for company and finds

solace in the weekly visits from his postman. However, when a pregnant unicorn decides to use his farm as a safe refuge, Bianchi is forced to let people into his cultivated loneliness, some of who threaten more than just his farm.

Beagle cultivates this idea of Bianchi and his farm bridging two worlds. Physically, Bianchi's farm exists "too far uphill for the American suntanners, and too low for the German skiers." The unicorn ensures the story too is taking place within both our reality and the mythic, where paparazzi and gangsters clash with folklore. It gives the tale a timeless quality and an absorbing sense of place.

Bianchi is a figure of two minds, desiring solitude while secretly longing for company. As his relationship with the unicorn develops, he begins to rediscover himself, and the reader follows this man returning to a life he had once rejected. It also helps that Beagle

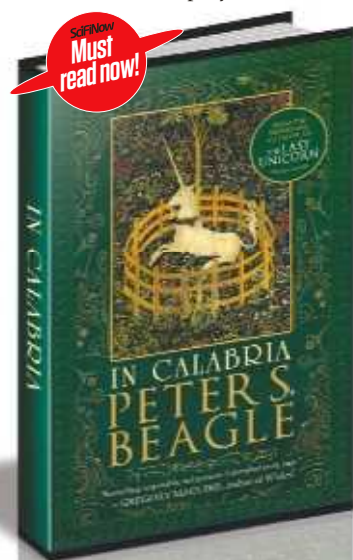
imbues the animals around him with a real sense of personality, including a nosy goat.

Aiding this is Beagle's gentle prose, describing enough to set the scene and stoke the imagination. The simplicity of the language belies the depth of the tale too; Beagle threads through explorations of the need for community, forgiveness and the importance of embracing the unknown rather than automatically fearing it.

A lyrical modern fairy tale, *In Calabria* is a lovely tale of finding magic in our world and the importance of protecting it while we have it. It's the hopeful kind of story we all need right now.

Becky Lea

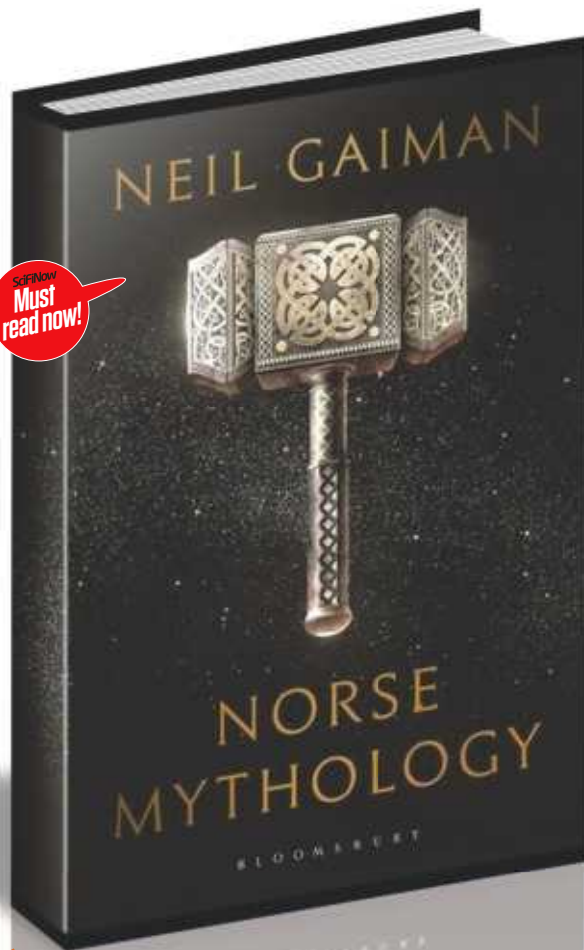
★★★★★



ScifiNow
Must read now!



The Ocean At The End Of The Lane
Neil Gaiman
Gaiman's tale of magic, childhood and colliding worlds is a fairy tale for all.



Details Author: Neil Gaiman Publisher: Bloomsbury
Price: £20 Released: Out now

NORSE MYTHOLOGY

Old gods

Fans of Neil Gaiman's work will be very familiar with his love of Norse mythology. The gods have played pivotal roles in *The Sandman* and *American Gods*, and with the popularity of these myths at a high point, it seems only right that the author gave us his version.

As you might expect, Gaiman takes his role as storyteller very seriously, and the tales of Odin, Thor, Loki and their fellows are presented with the respect that you'd expect. However, that doesn't stop Gaiman having a bit of fun, and he brings a nice bit of biting sharpness to the gods'... shall we say, difficult relationships.

Thor is an impulsive brute, Odin is a ruthless old trickster, and no one trusts Loki as far as they can throw him (and they frequently want to do far worse than throw him). These characters get themselves into situations that require cunning, brute strength, deception or all three to resolve, and Gaiman begins to hint at the storm that's brewing.

While it's great fun to read about the more absurd escapades of unwise

bets and even less wise thefts, and the surprisingly bloody ones, this really excels when Gaiman explores the bitter family feuds that sow the seeds of the oncoming Ragnarok.

The treatment of Loki's monstrous children and the brutal punishment for the god of mischief's behaviour pack a real punch here, and Gaiman has an obvious adoration for the cyclical nature of these myths. There are very few true endings, death is not always final, and the barriers between worlds are not particularly solid.

Readers may be familiar with these stories, but we're always excited to return to the nine worlds, and especially in the hands of a storyteller like Gaiman, they are an absolute treat.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Gospel Of Loki
Joanne Harris

Harris gives Loki the chance to tell his side of the story with this take on mythology. In fact, just read all of her Norse-inspired titles.

“GAIMAN HAS AN OBVIOUS ADORATION FOR THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF THESE MYTHS”

Details Author: AG Howard Publisher: Amulet Price: £11.99 Released: Out now

ROSEBLOOD

Phantom operatics

Having the voice of an angel is exhausting for Rune Germain, unable to complete a performance without winding up a wreck. A career on the stage is looking unlikely. To curb her stage fright, she is shipped off to the RoseBlood conservatory.

Already with an obsession for all things *Phantom*, Rune makes countless connections between the legendary Gaston Leroux novel *Le Fantome De L'Opera* and her spooky new school.

Told from alternating viewpoints, *Roseblood* gets off to a slow start – almost a quarter of the book passes before anything happens. Rune's accounts are tiresome, pages of eloquent, romantic prose that loom like a dreary, endless fog. It is lifted by the shorter third-person chapters that introduce Thorn, puppet of the phantom.

The action kicks in when Rune attends an invitation-only rave. She makes a pivotal discovery about who she is and why the mysterious boy from the shadows has such an effect on her. From this point on, the tone changes entirely.

Howard has made a bold move in retelling such an iconic tale, but by targeting a YA audience and dealing with more current, adolescent issues, comparisons may not be considered as important, and images of Michael Crawford and Sarah Brightman are kept to a minimum.

Claire Nicholls

★★★★★

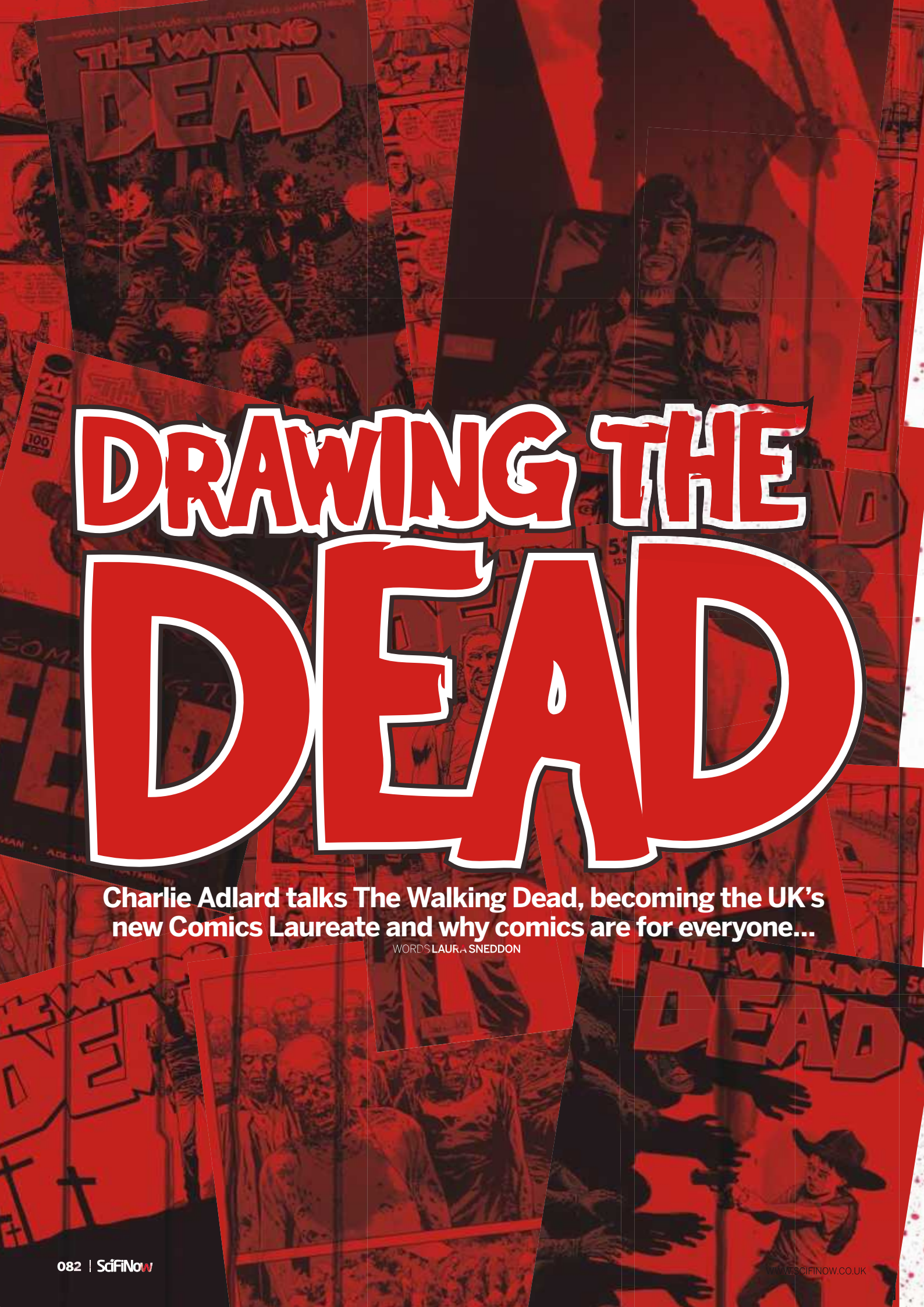


IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Dorothy Must Die
Danielle Page

Forget everything you know about Oz – Amy Gumm is the other girl from Kansas, and see things from a whole new angle.





DRAWING THE DEAD

Charlie Adlard talks The Walking Dead, becoming the UK's new Comics Laureate and why comics are for everyone...

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON



Having recently hit the headlines upon his appointment as the UK's new Comics Laureate, we caught up with *The Walking Dead* illustrator Charlie Adlard to chat about his new roles and, of course, drawing zombies.

Congratulations on your new role as Comics Laureate! Can you explain a little bit about it?

The main role of the Laureate is to promote and increase the awareness of the importance of comics as a medium. I'd also like to focus on their ability to improve literacy, especially to those who find conventional books intimidating. Comics are a non-threatening medium, and a great gateway to further reading.

There was a bit of fuss generated when you 'declared war' on the term graphic novel. What's your take on the conversation?

Well, I think the *Guardian* over-egged the pudding there! It was a good article, mind you, but I'm hardly declaring war. All I was saying was that I personally dislike the term 'graphic novel'. The words 'comic' and 'cartoonist' – especially in this country – has been somewhat tarnished with the moniker of 'just for kids', though the names have been with us for over a century.

I'm proud to call myself a cartoonist, and I draw comics – we don't need some created buzz word for grown-up comics. It's isolating. It makes the people who call themselves 'graphic novelists' appear to be above the rest of us. A comic is a comic, whether it's *The Beano* or *Maus*. Comics are for everybody, young or old.

When did you first find yourself drawn to comics, and how did you come to enter the industry yourself?

My dad brought home the first issue of the Marvel UK re-print title *The Mighty World Of Marvel* when I was five or six in 1972. At around the same time, I started collecting *Asterix* books because of a promotion at our local petrol station – fill up your car, get an *Asterix* book! Those were the two main catalysts that got me into comics forever. Little did I know at the time, though, that on one side I was being fed American comic books, and on the other French bandes dessinées, an influence I would carry in my work up till today.

It wasn't until my mid-20s, though, that I decided to give comics a serious go: I started going to conventions in the UK. At the time there were only two –

one in London and one in Glasgow. But it was at a time when the industry was wealthy, so the US could afford to fly multiple editors over to our shores – I didn't need to go over there. After about two years of showing my portfolio around, I eventually got work with the *Judge Dredd Magazine* – and, well, haven't looked back since.

What is it about *The Walking Dead* that you think has resonated so strongly with readers?

To be honest, I really do believe that a lot of it is just being in the right place at the right time. Obviously there was an appetite for this kind of story, and luckily we were there to fill the void.

I think that the reason *The Walking Dead* has lasted as long as it has is simply down to the characters. In the end, after we get past all the bluster and horror, what we're left with is character, and if those aren't good enough then we wouldn't have lasted.

“WHETHER IT'S THE BEANO OR MAUS, COMICS ARE FOR EVERYBODY, YOUNG OR OLD”

How do you create such iconic pages so ridiculously quickly?

I really don't know! I'm naturally fast. It's unexplainable. I just seem to do it. Myself and Robert [Kirkman]'s collaboration couldn't be simpler – and

I'm sure that helps with speed – he literally writes the scripts and I draw them. Not much in between. We trust each other in our skill sets.

I'm comfortable set in a routine, so my work days are very regular. It's just all straight down on the page. All these factors help with the sheer volume of *The Walking Dead* pages I do a week.

Are you able to enjoy the TV series as a fan, or is it a little too close to home?

Nicely put! Yeah, I've got to admit, coming to a season of *The Walking Dead* is like doing homework!

I do enjoy it when I do push myself to watch it, but I'm lagging behind. I just finished Season Five – so I've yet to get to [Jeffrey Dean Morgan] and Negan. My eldest son watches it now, so I can enjoy it more through him, and it gives me an excuse to continue viewing it.

Do you fear for the lives of any of your characters?

No, not really. When I first started working on the book, we knew that this was one of the fundamental rules of the story, and the more shocking the death of a beloved character is, the more exciting the story becomes.

What would you say to entice new readers to dive into TWD comics?

Well, I'd have to say that the comics are just better!

The Walking Dead: Volume 26 – Call To Arms is available to buy now, published by Image Comics.



© Niccolò Caranti

Comics are for everyone!
Here are the best of 2016

Monstress (Image)
Marjorie Liu, Sana Takeda

For the fan of science fiction and fantasy masterworks, there are none better than new fantasy epic *Monstress*, where steampunk and alternate 1900s Asia collide.



Vision (Marvel)
Tom King, Gabriel Hernandez Walta

For superhero fans, *Vision* won top acclaim and has even been likened to *Watchmen*, while King pulled the double and claimed a top hit for DC too with the political *Omega Men* (King, Barnaby Bagenda).



Fight Club 2 (Dark Horse)
Chuck Palahniuk, Cameron Stewart

Literary fans lined up to dive into the greatly anticipated sequel which, shockingly, beat its own hype. Equally beautiful is the dark and disturbing *Panther* (Brecht Evens).



I Am A Hero (Dark Horse)
Kengo Hanzawa

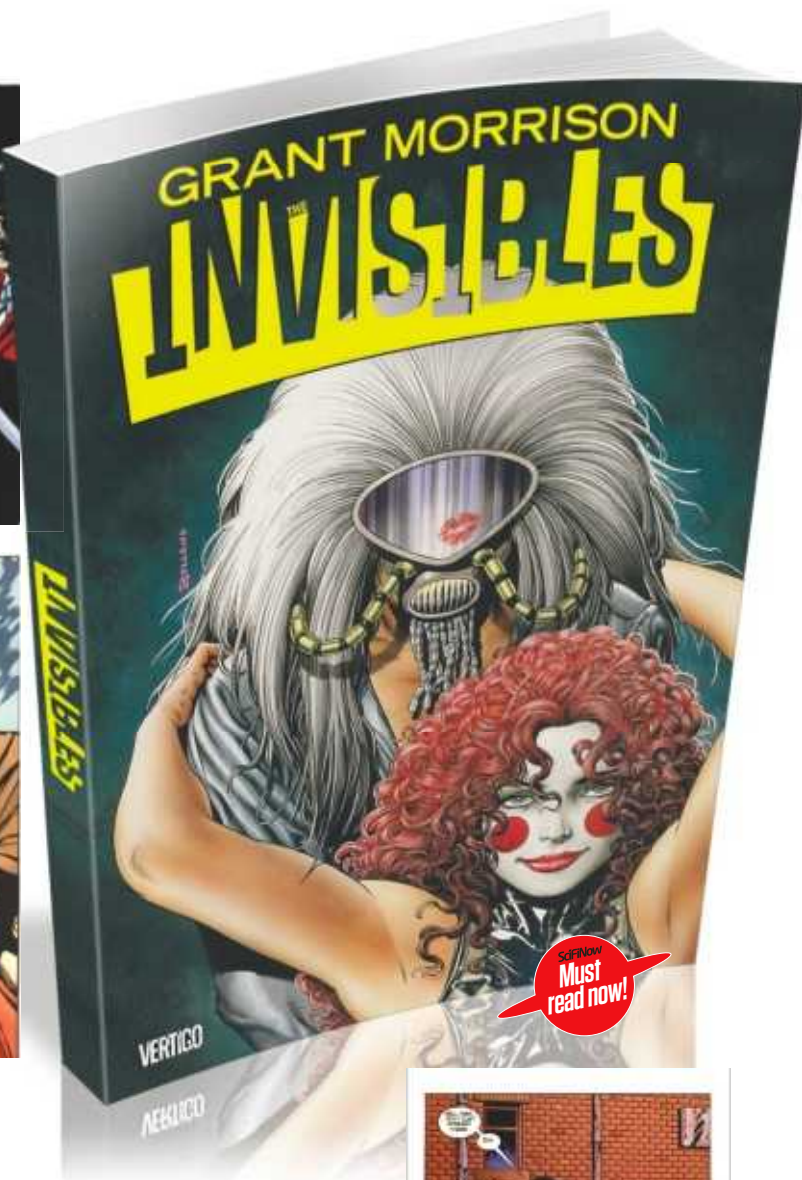
There have been far too many manga hits to list, but the long-awaited translation of Hanzawa's latest zombie-infused hit finally came to the UK, while romantic SF fans rushed to get their hands on *Orange* (Ichigo Takano).



Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina (Archie)
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, Robert Hack

For horror fans there is simply no better pick than this under the radar hit, a shockingly creepy take on the teenage witch many of us grew up with.





Details Writer: Grant Morrison **Artists:** Steve Yeowell, Jill Thompson et al
Publisher: Vertigo **Price:** £22.99 **Released:** 21 February

THE INVISIBLES: BOOK 1 The Matrix, Reinstated

There are two kinds of Grant Morrison comics: the superhero epics of Batman, Superman and other caped crusaders, and the deceptively loose and surreal chaos magic-infused tomes.

This spiralling saga encompasses the adventures of just one cell of the Invisibles, an anarchic organisation fighting against the Archons of the Outer Church, alien forces from another dimension that have enslaved most of the world without us noticing or caring. The tools at their disposal include time travel, magic, sex and guns as they fight against the masters of order both physically and psychologically.

It's a thunderclap of positive rebellious energy first published in the run-up to the turn of the century, perfectly capturing a time at which the human spirit thought that finally, just around the corner, things were about to get better. Our promised

Star Trek utopian future was nearly within our grasp, just one year before terrorism and the fear of the elite destroyed those dreams.

A lead character, King Mob, acted as a so-called 'fiction suit' for the writer, with Morrison claiming to feel the very real ill effects of what he put his avatar through, culminating in an emergency hospital stay. The writer claims this story was told to him by aliens from the fifth dimension during an abduction at Kathmandu.

A pantheon of artist gods have put their name to this work, from Frank Quitely to Steve Yeowell and Jill Thompson. The choppy quality of hopping from one artist to another fits well with the implausibly fractured nature of the narrative, with characters jumping through time and space.

What is *The Invisibles* about? It's about everything, man. *The Matrix* lifted heavily from this series for

many of its more inspired ideas, and initially poor sales as fans struggled to get to grips with the unexpected content led to a famous "wankathon" to increase comics sold. And it worked.

Dane McGowan is an angry teen from Liverpool, doomed to a fruitless and destructive path. Plucked from harm by the charismatic King Mob, Dane is thrown into life on the streets under the wing of a madman. As he begins to make sense of his strange new world, complete with alien experiences and dimensional shifts, the cell are back for a trip through time courtesy of astral projection.

Then things start to get strange. A modern classic for twisted brains.

Laura Sneddon

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Shade The Changing Man
Peter Milligan, Chris Bachalo
A forgotten classic, the lovelorn poet is here to save us from madness.





Details Writers: Kurt Busiek Artists: Ben Dewey, Jordie Bellaire Publisher: Image Price: £14.99 Released: 28 February

THE AUTUMNLANDS VOL 2: WOODLAND CREATURES

Welcome to the woodland

High-fantasy epics are a pretty rare occurrence in comics, the sheer scale of the world building and character design sending writers scurrying to the world of novels in which to forever delay their sixth instalment.

Fortunately, no one seems to have told Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*) and Ben Dewey (*The Tragedy Series*) as they plunge straight into the pulpish delights of the floating city of Keneil, “westernmost of the Seventeen Cities Above the Plain”. It’s here we meet Dunstan, a young bull terrier and hero of the unfolding adventures.

The world here is populated by beasts, and how this place, run on magic and ruled by wizards, came to be is a mystery. Why the magic is running out and who the summoned Great Champion – a human! – really is, are others.



Vol 2 begins the adventures anew after the fall of Keneil – an excellent starting place for new readers. Dunstan and the Great Champion are separated from the city folk and have different ideas on what to do next.

Busiek has been gestating this tale for ten years, and that patience is evident in the slowly unfolding world in all its extraordinary details. Dusty’s

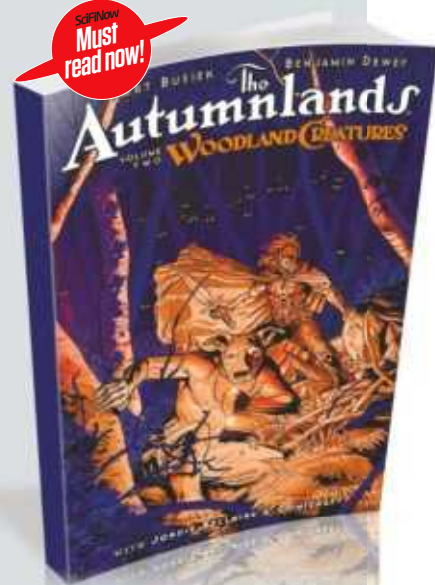
position as a privileged but naïve youngster makes him the perfect protagonist to discover his surroundings, with class and cultural tensions underlining the story.

Dewey’s background as a painter is evident in each chapter’s introduction, a two-page painted scene complete with prose extract from a faux pulp sword and sorcery novel explaining the events of the comic with a romantic tinge. His character work shines with the wide cast of characters and creatures, and more so in this volume where sci-fi elements begin to come to the fore.

It’s rare to see such detailed character work exist alongside intricate cityscapes and scenic landscapes, and the colours of Bellaire truly add a magic touch.

Laura Sneddon

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Copperhead

Jay Faerber, Scott Godlewski, Ron Riley
There’s a new sheriff in town, and the town is on a grimy backwater planet filled with lowlifes.

Details Writer: Cullen Bunn Artist: Tyler Crook Publisher: Dark Horse Price: £12.50 Released: 9 February

HARROW COUNTY VOL 4: FAMILY TREE

The horror! The horror!

Meet a little horror series from Dark Horse that has stayed remarkably under the radar while continuing to evolve in ever more delightfully twisted directions.

Prolific writer Cullen Bunn (*The Sixth Gun*, *Deadpool*) joins with relative newcomer Tyler Crook



(BPRD) to tell a witchy tale of ghosts and monsters. Emmy, about to turn 18, discovers just what her connection is to the evils of the woods surrounding her home in a quite unique rural horror yarn.

Sure, the ‘burn the witch’ tropes are a tad familiar, but the slow pacing of this comic is an oddity among contemporary horror, putting atmospheric build above gore or twists.

Four volumes in, and Emmy has forged a new relationship with the terrible creatures around her, with new sinister forces challenging her and her skinless boy familiar at every turn. There isn’t a comic quite like it, though it will certainly appeal to fans of *Locke & Key* and *Rachel Rising*, as Bunn and Crook concentrate on forging an entire new mythology for Emmy to pick her way through. The skinless boy alone – composed of two components, the talking flayed skin

piece and the fleshy skinless body – is masterful.

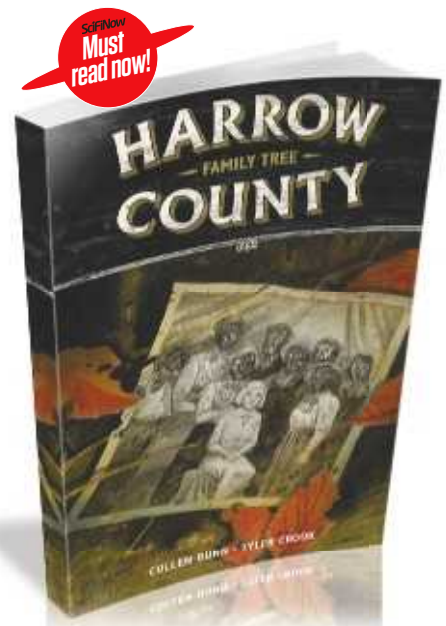
And what really sets *Harrow County* apart is the touch of Crook – fully painted pages are a rare treat in comics today, and Crook’s non-digital approach is even rarer. The opaque, bloodstained watercolours haunt the panels and pages, darkness lurks in the corners, and the southern Gothic aesthetic burns into the readers mind.

After seeing off a mysterious doppelgänger, and with her friend having saved the town from satanic snakes, now Emmy is confronted with a mysterious group of supernatural strangers claiming to be her true family.

Collecting issues #13-16, this is an easy starting point if you want to get in before the Syfy adaptation hits.

Laura Sneddon

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Wytches

Scott Snyder, Jock, Matt Hollingsworth
A genuinely terrifying comic from one of Batman’s best recent writers. Try not to read after dark.

Douglas Adams *Batteries Not Included Dollhouse

MAY 1995

£1.50

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SUIT?"

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AND
THANKS
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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DOUGLAS ADAMS

WE CELEBRATE THE WORK OF THE HOOPIEST FROOD AROUND, AND EXAMINE HIS IMPACT ON SCI-FI, COMEDY AND BEYOND...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEWS POPPY-JAY PALMER, JONATHAN HATFULL

Perhaps one of Douglas Adams' most famous turns of phrase – and he's basically known for his turns of phrase – is the one about deadlines. "I love deadlines," he wrote. "I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by."

Just knowing that Douglas Adams himself also struggled with them is enough to give anyone hope in times of need that things are probably going to turn out fine. If Adams couldn't handle them then who else among us should reasonably be expected to?

More comforting still is the extent of that struggle. During his early work on the *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* radio series, Adams began to develop problems with sticking to his deadlines, which only got worse as he started to write the accompanying novels.

"Writer's block doesn't really cover it," Maggie Phillips tells us. Adams was signed with Ed Victor Ltd Literary Agency, and Phillips was Ed Victor's assistant during the Eighties before becoming the company's managing director. She retired in 2014, but still helps out as a consultant. Back in the day, she was involved with sorting out Adams with publishing contracts, and got to know him, his late wife Jane and his daughter Polly quite well.

"It used to take him ages, and it was agony for him, and agony for his publishers too, who were waiting for these books that they knew would have a massive audience and sale," she continues.

When it came to working on the penultimate book of the trilogy of five, *So Long And Thanks For All The Fish*, Adams had to be locked in a hotel suite with his editor so that he'd actually get around to finishing it.

"We knew where he was!" Phillips laughs. "I think this happened twice! Once it was in a hotel in the country in Kent, and the other time it was



Douglas Adams left his mark on film, TV, radio and literature.

a hotel in Knightsbridge. We knew what was happening, and absolutely went along with it at the time. It seemed the only way the books were ever going to get written."

There were just too many distractions around when he was home alone for him to get any work done. He was a pretty popular guy, and was not one to turn down a leisurely lunch date with friends. He also adored computers and making his own programs, having once said that he would have liked to have been a software engineer when he was younger, had he known what software engineers were.

The result of many hours of being forced to work, Adams' back catalogue today includes a five-series radio comedy, a TV miniseries, seven novels, some short stories, a heap of other books, a couple of computer games and a screenplay credit for the 2005 *Hitchhiker's Guide*

film, among other things. Not bad for someone with a procrastination problem as outrageous as his.

The *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* series (the radio series, the novels and the TV show) was, and still is, Adams' most popular work. For those who are unfamiliar (surely such people don't exist, but anyway, we digress), *The Hitchhiker's Guide* tells the story of Arthur Dent and his often inconvenient but hilarious adventures through space after Earth is destroyed by the bureaucratic Vogons in order to make way for a hyperspace bypass.

The series, in all its forms, has undeniably had a momentous impact on science fiction literature, but it goes a lot further than that. "The main thing to remember about Douglas Adams was that he was a comedian, not a sci-fi author," says Jem Roberts, the author of *The Frood: The Authorised And Very Official History Of Douglas Adams And The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.

"All he ever wanted was to be either a Beatle or a Python, and though he enjoyed sci-fi as a kid, he had no time for it as a genre generally," Roberts continues. "His impact has been on sci-fi comedy more than sci-fi literature. If you want to see his greatest influence in today's culture, look to *Rick And Morty* (creators Justin Roiland and Dan Harmon are die-hard Adams fans) and *Bravest Warriors* – the latter particularly has a knack for presenting Adams-style mind-blowing concepts really quickly and simply."

Growing up, Adams lived off a radio comedy diet comprising the likes of *Beyond Our Ken*, *The Navy Lark*, *The Clitheroe Kid* and *Hancock*. "Anything that made me laugh," Adams is quoted saying in *The Frood*. "I thought there was something tremendously important about being funny, but I wasn't really funny for a while, and I gradually learned it, in a sense."

➤ Adams' talents in the worlds of both comedy and sci-fi have made so much of an impact that there has actually been debate among fans about whether or not *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* can actually be classed as sci-fi.

In *The Frood*, Adams says: "I've inadvertently done something quite clever, in that I've done a show which science fiction fans like because they think it's science fiction, and which people who don't like science fiction like because they think it's knocking science fiction."

The pilot for the *Hitchhiker's* radio show was written as a sitcom rather than a humorous sci-fi serial, and pitched to the BBC as 'a science fiction comedy adventure in time and space, which weaves in and out of fantasy, jokes, satire, parallel universes and time warps,' ticking the boxes for sci-fi fans and comedy fans alike.

And then of course, there was Adams' work on his trippy book series – if two and a half books can count as a series – *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, as well as the time he spent as a script editor during Series 17 of *Doctor Who*. His lax approach to the wider world of sci-fi fandom didn't extend to *Who*, of which he was a life-long fan.

As told in *The Frood*, Adams accidentally missed the very first episode of the show back in 1963, but he never dared to do so again after the second. He even went so far as to make appointments with the Doctor in his school's shared TV lounge.

The show also contributed in some part when it came to honing his writing skills. In 1964, Adams sat down and wrote a whole original episode of *Doctor Who* (entitled 'Doctor Which'), recorded it like a radio play and then presented the audio during his school's Christmas festivities to entertain his classmates.

He then went on to write three stories for the show, including 'The Pirate Planet' (which was the second serial in Season 16's 'The Key To Time' arc), 'City Of Death' (which was transmitted under the pseudonym 'David Agnew'), and 'Shada' (which was only partially filmed and not televised due to industry disputes. However, Gareth Roberts wrote an accompanying novelisation in 2012).

What's really quite staggering, albeit totally understandable, is how much of an impact Adams has had on the world in general, art and culture aside. It seems like every other weird invention dreamt up in his work, from the language-translating Babel Fish to the *Hitchhiker's Guide* itself, is gradually becoming reality.

"I end *The Frood* with a key quote from Douglas

about how modern scientists are influenced directly by science fiction, and how crucial it therefore is to envisage utopias rather than dystopias," explains Roberts. "It's clear that *Hitchhiker's Guide* especially has influenced the move of technology – it's weird to read in a 1984 novel of Ford Prefect uploading his work on the Guide via the sub-etha, and to recognise it as exactly parallel to uploading something on a tablet with Wi-Fi today – in 1984 it was entirely imaginary. It's like we're living in the world Adams dreamt of, but he's not

here to enjoy it alongside us."

"He was very clever and very funny, and I'm just so sorry that he's not here now to enjoy these things like iPhones and iPads, which he predicted would come about in this time, and he's not here to have fun with them," adds Phillips.

As a consultant for Ed Victor Ltd, part of Phillips' job is to handle the legal side of Adams' legacy.

"Many times I have been asked by a computer company if they could call a product 'Babel Fish,'" she says, "and we have always said no, because ➤

**"I'M JUST
SORRY THAT
HE'S NOT
HERE NOW TO
ENJOY THINGS
LIKE IPADS
AND IPHONES,
WHICH HE
PREDICTED"**

DOUGLAS ADAMS



The original adaptation of *Hitchhiker's Guide* aired in 1981.



TOP TEN THINGS INVENTED BY

1. THE INTERNET

The titular *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* is basically the Internet on a tablet, but invented by Adams before the Internet existed. It also contains information on everything in the entire universe.



2. TRANSLATORS

Babel Fish are used to translate any language when put inside your ear by absorbing and excreting brainwave energy. They are small, leech-like and probably the oddest things in the Universe.



3. TELEPORTATION DEVICES

Matter transference beams, which sophisticatedly work by 'feathering' you apart atom by atom, flinging those atoms through the sub-ether, and then jamming them back together again.



4. VIRTUAL REALITY

Point of View guns, which were created by Adams for the film version of *Hitchhiker's Guide*, allow the shooter to see things from the shootee's perspective when they just don't get it.



5. SMART WATCHES

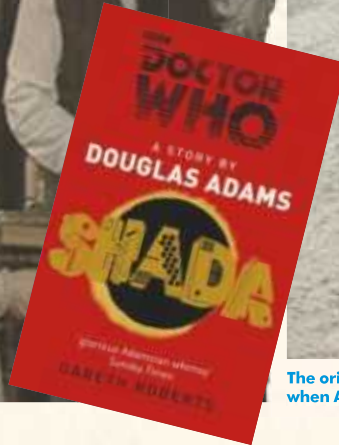
Crisis Inducers are small, watch-like devices that are used to induct artificial crisis situations. Though seemingly pointless on the surface, they are often used for crisis training purposes.





Adams acted as script editor for a number of episodes of *Doctor Who* and penned several, most notably the unaired 'Shada' serial.

The original Marvin can be seen in the 2005 film when Arthur queues to get his papers approved.



DOUGLAS ADAMS

6. PANIC-PREVENTING SPECS

Joo-Janta 200 Super-Chromatic Peril Sensitive Sunglasses, designed to turn completely black at the first hint of trouble, and prevent the wearer from seeing anything alarming.



7. FOOD TO TASTE

Nutrimatic Drinks Dispensers make an instant but highly detailed examination of your taste buds to predict what will go down well when you're absolutely gasping for a non-specific drink.



© Einar Faanes

8. MOST LETHAL ALCOHOL

Pan Galactic Gargle Blasters are often considered the best drinks in existence, with effects similar to "having your brains smashed in by a slice of lemon wrapped round a lard gold brick."



9. DEFENCE TOWELS

Towels were already useful before Adams got his hands on them, but he reckons they can also be used for warmth, as a gas mask, in hand-to-hand combat and as distress signals.



10. INSTANT TRAVEL

The infinite improbability drive was designed to allow weary travellers to cross interstellar distances in a nothingth of a second without having to muck about in hyperspace.





Sam Rockwell impressed as the two-headed Zaphod Beeblebrox.



up in space with a *Hitchhiker's Guide* poster on the wall!"

Ed Victor Ltd is also a point of contact when it comes to gaining permission to adapt Adams' stories into films and TV series. According to Phillips, very little of what is submitted is ever made, simply because most of it is deemed disrespectful, not viable or just bad. The successful few are chosen based on being what the literacy agency, and often Adams' daughter, think Adams might have liked.

The most recent of those projects is BBC America's eight-part series *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, based on Adams' novel of the same name. It stars Samuel Barnett as Dirk Gently and Elijah Wood as Dirk's assistant Todd Brotzman. Phillips clearly thought it worthy, as Season One is now available to stream on Netflix UK, and Season Two is on the way next year.

And the cast and crew aren't made up of random people who just needed another job; most of them are dedicated Douglas Adams fans.

"[Douglas] is in his writing," Barnett says. "I didn't know him at all, but when I read his work, you can just hear his voice, and I think the best writers put themselves into their work."

Barnett cites the unfinished third *Dirk Gently* book, *The Salmon Of Doubt: Hitchhiking The Galaxy One Last Time*, as his favourite. The book not only contains the *Dirk Gently* story Adams was in the middle of when he died, but also a collection of his other, unpublished writings.

"You read it, and you see his take on life, and you see his observations," Barnett explains. "He was a man full of huge intellect and wit, but also huge heart and soul, hugely funny, and he actually writes from a very, very human perspective. He's clever, because I think he writes about the everyday, mundane specific things, and makes them very funny and very universal so that we can all relate to them. That's what I think all great writers do who endure. They write about human nature in their own different ways, and I think Douglas was

no exception." ➤



"THEY'RE FLOATING UP IN SPACE WITH A HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE POSTER ON THE WALL!"

MAGGIE PHILLIPS



The permanently befuddled and out-of-his-depth Arthur Dent is the quintessential Douglas Adams creation.

ADAMSISMS

Douglas's greatest turns of phrase

**"ISN'T IT ENOUGH TO
SEE THAT A GARDEN IS
BEAUTIFUL WITHOUT
HAVING TO BELIEVE THAT
THERE ARE FAIRIES AT THE
BOTTOM OF IT TOO?"**

**"TIME IS AN
ILLUSION.
LUNCHTIME
DOUBLY SO"**

**"THE KNACK TO FLYING IS LEARNING
HOW TO THROW YOURSELF AT THE
GROUND AND MISS"**

**"IF YOU TRY TO TAKE A CAT APART TO SEE HOW
IT WORKS, THE FIRST THING YOU HAVE ON
YOUR HANDS IS A NON-WORKING CAT"**

**"I'M SPENDING A
YEAR DEAD FOR
TAX REASONS"**

**"SPACE IS BIG. YOU JUST WON'T
BELIEVE HOW VASTLY, HUGELY,
MIND-BOGGLINGLY BIG IT IS. I MEAN,
YOU MAY THINK IT'S A LONG WAY
DOWN THE ROAD TO THE CHEMIST'S,
BUT THAT'S JUST PEANUTS TO SPACE"**

**"THE SHIPS HUNG IN THE SKY IN MUCH THE
SAME WAY THAT BRICKS DON'T"**

**"HUMAN BEINGS, WHO ARE ALMOST
UNIQUE IN HAVING THE ABILITY TO LEARN
FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS, ARE
ALSO REMARKABLE FOR THEIR APPARENT
DISINCLINATION TO DO SO"**

**"NOTHING TRAVELS FASTER THAN THE
SPEED OF LIGHT WITH THE POSSIBLE
EXCEPTION OF BAD NEWS, WHICH OBEYS
ITS OWN SPECIAL LAWS"**

**"THERE IS A THEORY WHICH STATES THAT IF EVER ANYONE DISCOVERS
EXACTLY WHAT THE UNIVERSE IS FOR AND WHY IT IS HERE, IT WILL INSTANTLY
DISAPPEAR AND BE REPLACED BY SOMETHING EVEN MORE BIZARRE AND
INEXPLICABLE. THERE IS ANOTHER THEORY WHICH STATES THAT THIS HAS
ALREADY HAPPENED"**

COMPLETE GUIDE

DOUGLAS ADAMS



The 2005 adaptation of *Hitchhiker's Guide* was packed full of laughs.



Stephen Mangan led the cast of the BBC's unfortunately short-lived adaptation of *Dirk Gently* in 2012.



➤ The TV series' director, Arvind Ethan David, believes Adams' legacy has endured, and will continue to, simply because he was a genius. "I don't use that term lightly, and I don't use it generally," David tells us.

"He was a genius in a very specific sense, which is that he saw the everyday world differently from anybody else around him, and his great gift was in his writing. To have a sort of telepathy that lets you see the world the way he did, you feel smarter, you feel funnier, you feel more alive when you look at the world through Douglas Adams' eyes and through his writing.

"Whether that's talking about the absurdity of everyday life in Arthur Dent bravely, Britishly lying down in the mud in his dressing gown to prevent the British bureaucracy from tearing down his house – which just feels so true today, as it did 40 years ago – or whether it's talking about ideas of evolution, human consciousness, religion, game theory and all the other things that Douglas' writing effortlessly wraps up into a joke."

David also believes that his work has lasted because it's hard being funny. "Douglas was very, very funny, he was a world-class humourist, but to be funny and to make you think profoundly about the world at the same time. That's rare. And Douglas does it not once a book, not once a chapter, but in every line."

Though it has been more than 15 years since his death, Adams' legacy is still very much living

"DOUGLAS SAW THE EVERYDAY WORLD DIFFERENTLY FROM ANYBODY ELSE. HIS GREAT GIFT WAS IN HIS WRITING"

ARVIND ETHAN DAVID

on. As BBC America's *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* proves – along with the 2007 BBC Radio 4 version, the 2012 BBC Four miniseries starring Stephen Mangan and Darren Boyd, and the 2005 *Hitchhiker's Guide* film – people are still trying to recreate Adams' magic.

Artemis Fowl author Eoin Colfer even decided to round off the *Hitchhiker's Guide* series with a part six, *And Another Thing...*, which sees Arthur Dent's home planet of Earth come under the threat of being blown up (again), and subsequently continue his journeys through time and space. Before his death, Adams had expressed a want to continue the series. He said that since the last book in the trilogy of five, *Mostly Harmless*, was a pretty bleak instalment, he wanted to go back and finish on a more upbeat note. Colfer did him proud in that respect.

In the grand scheme of things, it's very easy to understand why Adams' writings seem to be eternal: they are, quite simply, works of genius. "*Hitchhiker's* in particular," says Roberts, "is one big hippy-style chill pill – it tells us that if there are aliens out there, they are as messed up and clueless as we are, and we should concentrate on two things – preserving our planet and its many species, us included, but equally importantly, having a bloody good time. That seems about right as far as intergalactic philosophy goes, and there's no wonder it still appeals."

The legacy of Douglas Adams also lives on in fan clubs everywhere, most notably the *Hitchhiker's Guide* appreciation society ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, named after Adams' fictional galactic sector containing Earth. The society

Ex-History Boy Samuel Beckett currently leads Netflix's outing, with a second season already confirmed.

also publishes a quarterly magazine titled *Mostly Harmless*.

"I'm an honorary lifetime member," says Phillips. "I'm on the mailing list for the magazine, and just occasionally they surprise me with something that I didn't know."

Obviously, any day is a great day to celebrate Douglas Adams. But 25 May, the birthday of the Frod himself, is a date to mark down in your diaries every year if you don't already do so. Now and forever known as Towel Day, fans all over the world use the date to pay tribute to the late, great writer and humourist. He was a guy who really knew where his towel was.

The Frod: The Authorised And Very Official History Of Douglas Adams And The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy by Jem Roberts is out now. The complete *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* TV miniseries is available to download from the BBC Store. 2012 *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* is available on DVD, and the new series is available to stream on Netflix UK.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Adams' cornucopia of other inspirations



Though his work on the various incarnations of *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* is what really made his name in the sci-fi world, Adams' first love was comedy. He actually started his career as a sketch writer and performer.

In Jem Roberts' biography *The Frod*, Adams' greatest comedy influences are revealed: "I wanted to be a writer-performer like the Pythons," he said. "In fact, I wanted to be John Cleese, and it took me some time to realise that the job was taken." Adams was just 17 when *Monty Python's Flying Circus* first aired, but he still went on to work with his heroes later in life. He also became one of only two non-Pythons to be credited with writing material for *Flying Circus*, the other being oftentimes collaborator Neil Innes.

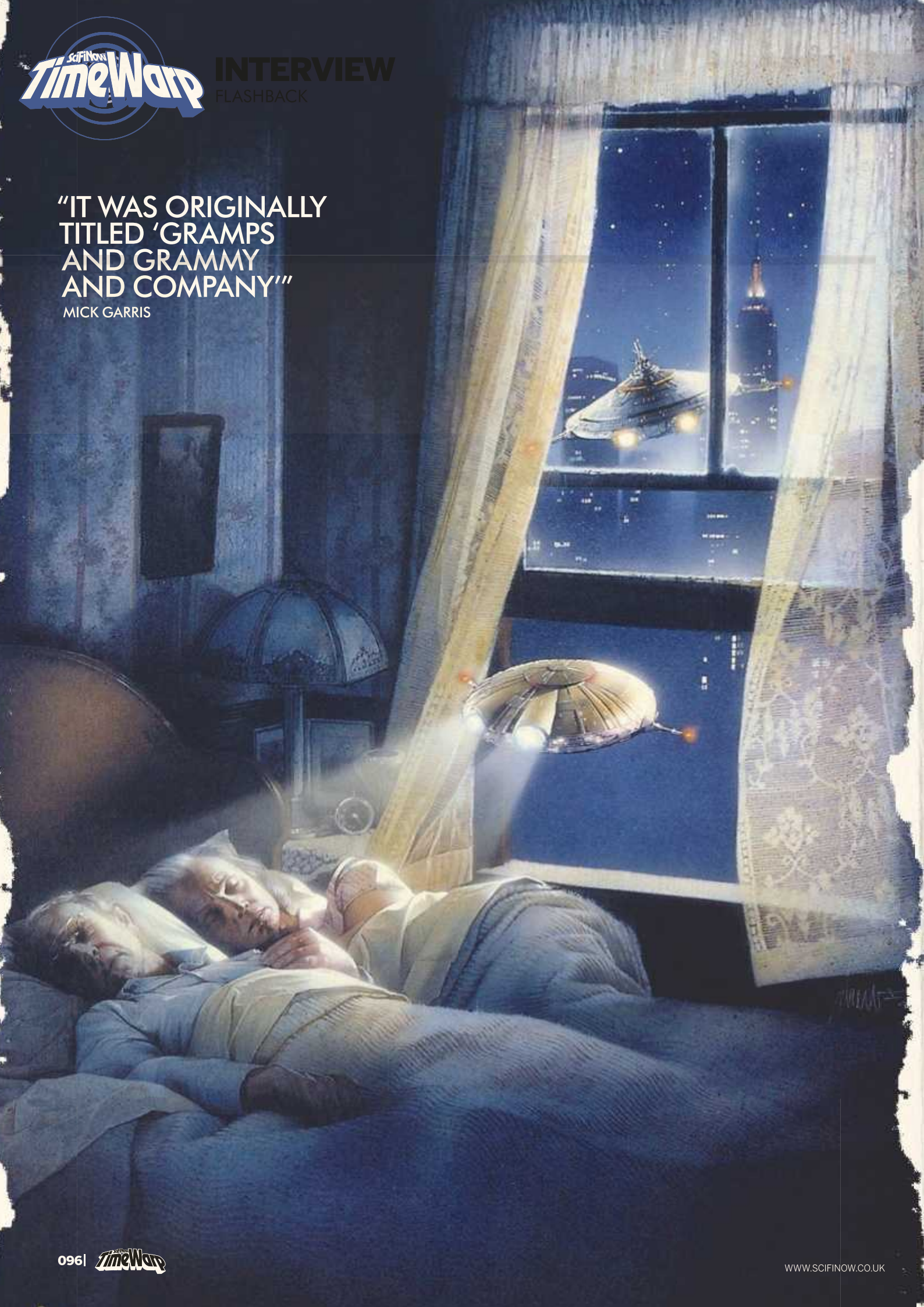
Not all of Adams' influences were human, though. Nature played a large part in his life. One of his non-genre but equally fantastic books, *Last Chance To See*, followed Adams' adventures with zoologist Mark Carwardine as they travelled the world with the hopes of encountering species of animal that were on the brink of extinction, including the aye-aye in Madagascar, the Yangtze river dolphin in China, the Amazonian manatee in Brazil and the Juan Fernández fur seal of on the Juan Fernández Islands in Chile.

Like *Hitchhiker's Guide*, the book also had an accompanying radio series. Sadly, at least one of the species featured in *Last Chance To See* has become extinct since it was published.



**"IT WAS ORIGINALLY
TITLED 'GRAMPS
AND GRAMMY
AND COMPANY'"**

MICK GARRIS





FLASHBACK

*BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

WE LOOK BACK AT THE SCI-FI CLASSIC WITH WRITERS MICK GARRIS AND SS WILSON AND DISCUSS WORKING WITH STEVEN SPIELBERG AND THE INSPIRING ENVIRONMENT AT AMBLIN ENTERTAINMENT

WORDS JAMES CLARKE

With its fairy tale-like premise, **batteries not included* fits right in with the mid- and late-Eighties fantasy boom, and the film's playfully realised visual effects, courtesy of Industrial Light & Magic, gave us a team of diminutive mechanised extra-terrestrials that are fuelled by considerable charm and invention. Adding all the more to the whimsical and otherworldly appeal of the story is the musical score by the Academy Award-winning James Horner.

Arguably less well-known than the Amblin movies that preceded it, **batteries not included* deserves a celebration on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. In recent years there has been a lot of enthusiasm directed towards the films that were produced during the Eighties by the Steven Spielberg-associated production company.

Established by Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall, the first movie to bear the iconic *ET*-inspired logo was *Gremlins*. Amblin specialised in fantasy and science fiction movies, often buoyed by healthy doses of comedy. Those movies tracked their way right through the border country between childhood and adolescence telling stories of adventure and courage and, usually, of kids who find themselves up against the odds. To some degree then, **batteries not included* was a slightly different Amblin movie. Just look at the exquisitely serene poster image that Drew Struzan painted to promote the movie: it depicts an elderly couple asleep under the New York skyline, their bedroom window open to otherworldly intercession.

Back To The Future and *The Goonies* had been released in summer 1985 to healthy reviews. There was another Amblin project released that year, *Amazing Stories*, which had been produced for television. With its stirring and

wistful John Williams-composed theme music, and breakthrough efforts in terms of the largely CG-rendered title sequence, the anthology series of weekly self-contained episodes were largely based on stories written by Spielberg.

One of the *Amazing Stories* episodes that never made it to television, but which instead morphed into a feature project, was **batteries not included*. Writer Mick Garriss was involved from its inception, while SS Wilson was brought on board a little later in the script development process. Also added were Brad Bird, who went on to direct and write the likes of *The Incredibles* and *Tomorrowland*, and Matthew Robbins, later to collaborate with Guillermo del Toro on *Mimic* and *Crimson Peak*, as director.

Garris begins by recounting the initial creative impulse for the screenplay. "It actually began with Steven Spielberg,"

he remembers. "When *Amazing Stories* was coming together, Steven had written outlines, ranging in length from a paragraph or two to several pages, for proposed stories for the series. This was one of them, originally titled 'Gramps And Grammy And Company'. Then Spielberg decided that it was a big enough idea for a feature film, and he offered it to me to adapt when I was working on the show."

Of the particular creative challenges involved in shaping the **batteries not included* screenplay, Garriss recalls that there were plenty. "This was in the days before digital effects were in wide use, so all of these creations had

to be done in what was cutting-edge then, and old school now. But in the writing, technology should not hamper your imagination, so we tried to free ourselves of those limitations. We knew we ➤



Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy star as Frank and Faye Riley; visited by otherworldly help just when they need it most.

➤ wanted to throw a sweet and sympathetic older couple into a decaying neighbourhood, an environment that was pushing them out, and then have some interaction from little ship-robots that had lives of their own. It was two different societies that were alien to each other, who needed each other, but in a very entertaining, identifiable world. It was intended to be made on a relatively modest budget, and Spielberg wanted to use Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* as a touchstone for the brownstone that they lived in."

Coming on board the screenplay process further into its development were the writing team of SS Wilson and Brent Maddock. "Brent and I were at Amblin working on *Ghost Dad* when Steven asked us to rewrite *batteries* to shorten it," starts Wilson. "It was already in pre-production. Brad [Bird] and Matthew [Robbins] had no time to do the needed revisions to reduce the budget. We ended up doing quite a bit of re-writing. That's why we ended up sharing credit on the final screenplay. Brent and I always work very closely. He tends to be the 'character' guy, and I tend to be the 'plot' guy. He comes up with more of the dialogue. I contribute much of the story logic and problem-solving."

The playful visitors to New York city effortlessly repair all sorts of problems.



"I LOVE THAT IT STILL FEELS ONE OF A KIND. IT'S IMAGINATIVE, IT'S FUNNY, AND IT HAS A BIG HEART"

MICK GARRIS

Of the final film and how it adheres to his vision for the story, Garris points out, "There are a lot of changes that were made when Matthew Robbins and Brad Bird came on board. It became a bit more kid-orientated. And I had Hume Cronyn's character playing part-time in a local amateur big band that rehearsed from time to time, and the big band music was a substantial part of the soundtrack, two time periods bumping up against one another. But a lot of what we had done earlier is reflected in the movie."

Being an Amblin production, Spielberg was heavily involved with the development of the movie. Garris recalls how the initial idea for the script was Spielberg's. "He gave Matthew full reign once he came on board as director," he explains. "And from that time on, I was no longer involved, which is not an unusual situation. The same

thing happened on *Amazing Stories*. I had written the script for what became 'The Main Attraction', but once Matthew came on board, he brought in Brad, and the two of them did any of the rewriting that was necessary at the time."

"It was great fun to work on, if a little chaotic," adds Wilson. "Spielberg was quite involved in the movie, and was often in the meetings along with Matthew, Brad and others. So there were many ideas floated, new scenes written and sometimes later thrown out." The film itself had a lot of budget issues, which resulted in having to cut and shorten scenes, and finding simpler ways to achieve the same goals.

"There was much discussion of the characters, Wilson continues. "It was an ensemble cast, and we all felt it was important to give each character important moments to keep everything balanced. Probably the most work went into finding the voice and arc for each character, then finding the space/pages to squeeze it all in within the budget."

"We all merrily forged ahead, making decisions, solving problems," Wilson tells us. "Robbins was very much 'The Director'. It was his job to take the script and get it on film. So his was the tie-breaker decision on all points." Wilson speaks very highly of Robbins, adding, "He gave us newbies many good bits of advice on our own career. He once brought in stellar writer Walter Bernstein to chat with us about a scene we were stuck on. Walter gave us tips on problem-solving that we use to this day."

Of course, Robbins wasn't the only movie genius working on the film, as the Amblin Entertainment founder also taught Wilson. "Spielberg was both task-master and idea-machine. It was crucial to him that movies not go over budget, so he was merciless in telling Matthew that *batteries* had to be shot in x-days for x-money and not a penny more."

Even though Spielberg made sure the production didn't go over budget, Wilson speaks of his influence highly too. "He was all over us with new ideas to try out. Even though he was working on many other things simultaneously, including his own upcoming feature, in meetings on our project I sometimes felt he knew the details our script better than we did."

When asked about what he is most proud about, Garris is quick to reply, "I love that it still feels like one of a kind. It's imaginative, it's funny, and it has a big heart... in other words, very Spielbergian. It's wonderful that people remember it with such fondness, that that it still has a life of its own."



The undeniably cute visitors, dubbed 'Fix Its', enchant the residents of the run-down apartment building.

*BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED FLASHBACK



Visual effects studio ILM deployed believably realised miniature model and animation work, typifying their contribution to sci-fi movies.



© Damon D'Amato

FOR THE LOVE OF SCI-FI

We ask why the science fiction genre appealed so much to Garris and Wilson

Mick Garris

"The idea of unbridled imagination, but set in a world that we all recognise, is exciting to me. My favourite movies aren't necessarily the ones that are set in space with laser battles and CGI aliens, but rather movies with a unique premise set in a world we live in; just enough of a twist that you can suspend disbelief and completely buy into fantastical turns of events in our own neighborhood. That's the kind of fantasy and science fiction that appeals to me."

SS Wilson

"It's what I grew up reading and watching. I was a big reader, first of HG Wells, Jules Verne and the other classics. Later of Robert Heinlein, AE Van Vogt, Frank Herbert, Theodore Sturgeon, Richard Matheson, etc. I read fantasy and sci-fi comic books. From a very early age I was drawn to the out-of-the-ordinary. I was never interested in slice-of-life stories and teen-angst stories. The comic with the dinosaur on the cover was always the one I would buy."

Garris reflects on the appeal of the science fiction genre more broadly, noting, "The idea of unbridled imagination, but set in a world we all recognise, is exciting to me. My favourite movies aren't necessarily the ones that are set in space with laser battles and CGI aliens, but movies with a unique premise set in a world we live in; just enough of a twist that you can suspend disbelief and buy into fantastical turns of events in our own neighborhood. That's the kind of fantasy and science fiction that appeals to me."

Wilson, however, is aware that a lot of the work that went into making the final product isn't down to just his work, or any one person. "I can't take credit for my strongest impression of the movie now. It is so unique; even a bit strange! But that's entirely due to Spielberg's willingness to do something so different; a decision made long before Brent and I got involved. So I can only enjoy knowing that our dialogue, bits of action, and character touches are sprinkled throughout; that we got to work on a movie I bet you couldn't get made in today's Hollywood."

Looking back on his time working at Amblin, Garris recalls, "It was a very exciting time to be in the most important production company of the era. It was incredibly stimulating and encouraging, and Spielberg really was hands-on. I was very fortunate to be housed there at that time. I learned a lot from the filmmakers on *Amazing Stories*, and even more directly from Steven himself."

Wilson, too, is very fond of his time working on the film, "I treasure those days, and knew even then what a magical time I was lucky enough to be participating in."

"Working at Amblin was the best time of our writing careers," reflected Garris, "except for when we finally got to make the *Tremors* movies, over which we had total creative control. There was a tremendous spirit and energy at Amblin. The studio itself was whimsical, with the *Jaws* shark

down inside a wishing well in the courtyard, free candy in a case in the screening room, free-to-play video arcade consoles in the rec room, etc. Ideas and possibilities were welcomed at all times.

"Once, in a meeting with Spielberg, someone walked by in the hallway and Steven interrupted us to hear his idea for an *Amazing Story*," he recalls. "After a few minutes, he gave the okay for the fellow to write it, then we went back to our meeting. That's how fast and furious and free-wheeling it was. Everyone knew it was all in the spirit of finding the best idea."

Of the current allure of those Amblin movies from 30 years ago and their fascination for genre fans today, Garris notes, "It's very much a creation of its time, isn't it? It has all of those elements that are being saluted in things like *Stranger Things*, a time when nobody made movies like Spielberg, but everybody tried. And even though Steven did not direct the movie, his fingerprints are everywhere on it, which is a very good thing.

"The fact that it brings back warm, nostalgic memories of the audience from way back when is pretty powerful. It's thrilling to have taken part in any project that sticks with you over the decades,



and is still shared with ever-newer audiences. It's a very lucky thing."

**batteries not included* is available to buy on Blu-ray now.







INTERVIEW

SOPHIE ALDRED

THE FINAL COMPANION OF THE CLASSIC SERIES OF DOCTOR WHO, SOPHIE ALDRED STARTED PLAYING ACE IN 1987, AND HASN'T REALLY STOPPED SINCE, CONTINUING NOW IN THE AUDIO ADVENTURES FROM BIG FINISH. WE SPOKE TO HER ABOUT HER LOVE OF ACTING, HER CHILDHOOD FEAR OF THE CYBERMEN AND HOW SHE GOT THE NICKNAME 'OLD BRUISER'

WORDS MARTIN PARSONS

How did you first get into acting?

I have always wanted to be an actor! I remember consciously from about the age of five when I used to do plays in our garage. I used to have to be the handsome prince, the director and the star, of course. It just went on from there really. I had a fantastic teacher when I was seven or eight at school, and she really loved drama. At secondary school I did an opera called *Amahl And The Night Visitors*, and I played the lead. I just loved it. I absolutely loved acting, and just knew that was what I wanted to do.

How aware were you of Doctor Who before getting the part?

I think everybody was aware of *Doctor Who*. I used to make my brother watch it on the sofa while I watched it through a crack in the door, just in case anything untoward should happen! I had nightmares about Cybermen, and my mum stopped me watching it for quite a while because I was so scared. But I got my chance to get my own back on the Cybermen in 'Silver Nemesis' when I killed them off with my gold coins and catapult! That was good therapy.

How did you get cast as Ace?

I was in *Fiddler On The Roof* up in Manchester, and my agent put me up for *Doctor Who* for three episodes. They wanted somebody who looked younger than they really were and who could ride a motorbike, and for some reason I had learnt to ride a motorbike in my youth. I went to London to this audition, not thinking anything of it really – rather begrudging the train fare, because it was expensive having to get down there at peak time and then back for the show in the evening. I met

Chris Clough, the director, and got on very well with him. I had to do a piece from *Daisy Pulls It Off*, and then we had a chat.

I got a recall a couple of weeks later, but this time I met John Nathan-Turner [*Doctor Who*'s executive producer from 1980-89] in his magnificent office with Dalek curtains. I did a piece, which I then found out was Ace's speech from 'Dragonfire' [her debut serial]. John asked me to do it again, gave me a few notes, and that was it. Lo and behold, a couple of weeks later I got into the theatre, and my agent had been trying to ring me all day.

I rang her, and she said, "You've got the job, but it's a lot more complicated than that!" I was just

bowled over. I rang her back, and she said that they wanted to know if I would consider being the new *Doctor Who* girl. I hadn't even had a screen test, and I'd never been in a studio, it was amazing. John Nathan-Turner, I think he'd just had a hunch. So that was it – I got the part.

How was the role of Ace described to you before you started?

I wasn't really told that much. I did think to myself, "Hang on a minute...", because the perception of a *Doctor Who* girl was screaming a lot and falling over in quarries in high heels, and I definitely wasn't that type. Then I got the script for 'Dragonfire', and it all made sense! I loved the character of Ace, I just really got her. ➤



© John Clark



Aldred and Sylvester McCoy were not aware when filming 'Ghost Light' that it would be the final recorded story of *Doctor Who*'s initial run.

➤ **Did you add to the scripts at all? Was your chemistry with Sylvester McCoy something the writers picked up on and included in their scripts?**

It was a mixture of both actually. I think the writers thought, "Oh, these two have this great relationship", so that inspired them. We were very happy usually with the way the scripts had been written. Every now and again there was something that was not quite right. I think the Doctor was the one with the RPG in the original script [of 'Remembrance Of The Daleks'], and Sylvester was very clear that he didn't want his Doctor to have anything to do with weapons, so he said, "Let Ace have it." It does make a lot more sense. Great fun for me!

Ace was a very physical character. Were minor injuries very much part of the job?

Oh completely, yes. Sylvester used to call me "the old bruiser"! I had bruises all over my knees all the time. I chucked myself around, it was so funny. The folly of youth. I'd never do that now – well, I probably would actually, given half the chance!

What, for you, was the best monster during your time on the show?

Well, I did like the Cybermen, particularly as they were played by six-foot-plus male models

"SYLVESTER DIDN'T WANT HIS DOCTOR TO HAVE WEAPONS, SO HE SAID, 'LET ACE HAVE IT!'"

SOPHIE ALDRED

underneath those costumes, because they had to have people of a certain stature, so when they took their helmets off it was nice to look at them.

I think the other monsters that worked really well were the Haemovores in 'The Curse Of Fenric'. They were humanoid, but they had those brilliant masks, with barnacles and bits hanging off them. I thought that they were very effective, especially when they came out the sea.

If you had to choose one standout moment for Ace as a companion, what would it be?

It would be beating up the Dalek with a baseball bat! Who could not choose that moment?

You were there at the end of the original run of the show. Did you notice at the time that you were fighting a losing battle with the people in charge?

We were shielded from all that by John Nathan-Turner, and that shows what a good producer he was. He was dealing with the flak, and we had no idea. We kind of knew that there was a bit of



Her stories benefitted from her real-life friendship with Sylvester McCoy.



One thing's for sure – Ace doesn't go off and marry somebody!

politics going on, there were some group of fans who were vociferously anti-John Nathan-Turner, and we tried to keep away from that as much as we possibly could.

We were fully expecting to go back into the next year, into the next season. Even when we were filming that last story, which was 'Ghost Light', we had no idea. It was just business as usual. At the end of that we had our usual party in the basement room at TV Centre, and thought, "Right, we'll see you next year." Then a few weeks after that we found out that the BBC had decided not to take up our option for the next season.

Ace has probably had more exits and endings than any other in Doctor Who – she has been a time-travelling vigilante, been killed off, trained to be a Time Lord... Do you have a favourite from these, and is there a way you'd like Ace to go out?

One thing's for sure – she doesn't go off and marry somebody! I like all those endings. I can never choose which is my favourite. I love the idea of going to Gallifrey and putting the wind up Time

Lords. At first when Russell T Davies did the 'A Charitable Earth' thing [the clue is in the initials, guys], I thought, "Oh, that sounds a bit wimpy." Then I thought, "No, hang on a minute!" Ace would be this sort of direct-action, Greenpeace-type person, probably travelling round space in a battered spaceship, a bit like the Millennium Falcon – and I bet she's got her own version of a Wookiee and a droid – and they'll be going round righting wrongs. I like that idea.

Have you had any particularly memorable interactions with fans?

Oh gosh, there are always great, memorable moments with the fans. They come to our table and tell us stories about themselves and their lives. We get to know these people really well, and maybe they tell us things they wouldn't even tell their families. That's an enormous privilege. There are many autistic fans – I've got such an understanding of autism now that I would never have had, a real love for these people who sometimes find it really hard to express themselves. Actually these are the most amazing



SOPHIE ALDRED FLASHBACK



WICKED!

Ace's top 5 moments

"Who are you calling small?" – Remembrance Of The Daleks (1988)

The definitive Ace scene – armed with a supernaturally powered baseball bat, she bashes up a Dalek, which proceeds to destroy a school chemistry lab while trying to zap her. Funny, thrilling and really damn cool.



"Bye now, Bellboy... all the best" – The Greatest Show In The Galaxy (1988)

Ace says goodbye to a man she knows is going to die. It's not the sort of action-packed moment we associate with her but it is a lovely character-building scene that shows the fragility under Ace's tough-girl demeanour.



"I'm not scared now" – The Curse Of Fenric (1989)

Ace finally reconciles herself with her past and leaps into the sea in a symbolic rebirth. No companion has been put through the emotional wringer as much as Ace (especially in this story!), and this scene is a lovely payoff.



"I felt like I could run forever..." – Survival (1989)

Ace comes close to succumbing to the powerful alien influence of the Cheetah People. She manages to fight it, but remembers the power of the encounter in this poetic and touching scene.



"This is the end" – Love And War (1992)

Paul Cornell's novel saw Ace finally snap at the Doctor and leave him (for a while). In Jac Rayner's 2012 adaptation for Big Finish we finally got to hear this in Sophie's voice. And it's very sad.



Ace's character was explored in more depth than any previous companion, particularly in 'The Curse Of Fenric'.

people with the most incredible things to offer, it's just that they are not doing it in the same way as most of us. There's a particular fan, he's such a dear, sweet man. I saw him a few weeks ago and he just came up to me and said, "I love you Sophie!" It's completely genuine, really lovely. I said, "Yeah, I love you, too, actually!"

Have you seen much of a change in fandom since the show came back on TV?

Not as much as you would expect. A lot of the same people are still coming to us because they're incredibly loyal. These are the people who got the show back on the air. They are bringing their families, of course, and there are a lot of children watching the new show and then coming to classic Doctor Who – we like to call it classic rather than old! I suppose the biggest difference is cosplay.

On average, how many Ace cosplayers do you encounter per convention?

Goodness me, there are lots in America. I think it's because she's very distinctive, and the jacket is easy to do. Also, her costumes are quite comfy – I

was looking at some of the people at Comic-Con this weekend in their uncomfortable-looking anime costumes, and I was thinking that's where the Aces have the advantage in their sensible shoes and leggings and nice warm jackets.

Do you think you'll ever stop working on Doctor Who, or being Ace?

Sylvester said a while back that he never realised the job came with a pension! It is a bit like that. I just love the people who are working on it. It attracts the most amazing calibre of actor, and we all have a lot of fun. Why wouldn't I want to continue having fun and meeting amazing people? Also, having work at my age, the age of 53, which is quite a tough time for an actress in many ways. There are not many parts for us women. There are more than there were, and it's increasing slowly, but it's a great opportunity for me to have challenging and great work to do.

You can buy the various Doctor Who serials starring Sophie Aldred on DVD now, distributed by 2entertain.

INTERVIEW

RICHARD KELLY ON DONNIE DARKO

28 DAYS, 6 HOURS, 42 MINUTES AND 12 SECONDS – THAT’S HOW LONG A DEAD MAN IN A BUNNY SUIT TELLS DONNIE HE’S GOT UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD, AND IT’S ALSO ROUGHLY HOW LONG RICHARD KELLY HAD TO MAKE THE FILM THAT WOULD DEFINE HIS CAREER...

WORDS SARAH DOBBS



No one could doubt Richard Kelly’s commitment to Sparkle Motion, because while it’s easy to draw parallels between *Donnie Darko*’s writer-director and its troubled hero, there’s clearly a side to Kelly that’s much more like Ms Farmer, the overbearing gym teacher who insists on getting every detail of her pre-teen dance squad’s routine exactly right, down to the last spirit finger.



That iconic “stupid bunny suit”.

Kelly was 23 years old when he wrote the screenplay that would become *Donnie Darko*. He had studied film at the University of Southern California, but while he had made a couple of shorts, he was intimidated by the prospect of writing something longer. It wasn’t until after he’d graduated, when he was working as a production assistant in a music video production house, that *Donnie Darko* started to take shape.

“I spent my entire life trying to think of the most compelling story for my first screenplay,” he says while talking to us about the film’s 4k restoration. “And this is what emerged.” Via a friend who also worked as a production assistant, Kelly managed to get his script onto the desk of an agent at Creative Artists Agency, which got him called into meetings with producers and agents. They were all impressed by his talent, and wanted to get him working on other scripts. Kelly wasn’t interested.

“A lot of people thought [*Donnie Darko*] was just a writing sample,” he says. “They thought it was unproduceable, and they thought I wasn’t ready to direct a film. But I stuck to my guns.” He kept shopping the script around until a guardian angel stepped in. Drew Barrymore (probably not wearing a bunny suit) and her Flower Films partner Nancy Juvonen read the script and loved it. With Barrymore on board in a minor role, things started to fall into place.

Casting was the next hurdle. Kelly originally wanted Jason Schwartzman in the lead after his

star-making turn as Max Fischer in *Rushmore* a couple of years earlier, and he would have been an obvious fit for awkward Donnie. Unfortunately, a scheduling conflict meant that Schwartzman had to pull out at the last minute. “We had a shortlist of other actors,” Kelly remembers. “But when Jake [Gyllenhaal] walked into the room, I just had a gut instinct that he was the right actor for the role. I offered it to him on the spot.”

Kelly also cast Gyllenhaal’s real-life sister, Maggie, as Donnie’s sister Elizabeth. But there was one role that looked set to be trickier to cast: Jim Cunningham, who Kelly describes as “a demented self-help guru who has a very dark side.” Barrymore helped out again, introducing Kelly to Patrick Swayze. Despite his leading man reputation, he was up for the challenge. “He was in a position in his career where he was really willing to take some risks and do indie films,” says Kelly. “That was a really challenging role, and Patrick was willing to go there.”

“THEY THOUGHT I WASN’T READY TO DIRECT A FILM. BUT I STUCK TO MY GUNS”

RICHARD KELLY

RICHARD KELLY

INTERVIEW



Donnie Darko made Jake Gyllenhaal a star.



The film was ultimately shot in 28 days for just \$4.5 million – the absolute minimum Kelly had calculated he needed to make it. It wasn't easy. "There was a time when it was difficult for me to watch it, because I'd attached so many anxieties to the process of making it," he recalls. "It was quite an ordeal to get it made. But there are a lot of fond memories too, and hindsight has a way of healing those painful experiences."

Hindsight – and critical adulation – might well have soothed the pain of production, but making the film was only half the battle. Though it's a beloved cult classic now, it's not hard to imagine an alternate timeline where it flopped instead. "It was not a success at Sundance," says Kelly. "No one wanted to distribute it. It took six months to get a distribution deal, and even then the distributor who bought it was not enthusiastic about the film at all. We had to beg them to put it in theatres."

Donnie Darko found another champion in Christopher Nolan. His support got the film its theatrical release, but it still faltered. In October 2001, it was difficult to work out how to market a film that revolved around a plane crash – and post-9/11 audiences weren't feeling much like going to the cinema anyway.

Slowly the film started to find its audience. Critics began to fall under its spell, and by the

FIVE FAMILIAR FACES TO LOOK OUT FOR

Beyond Barrymore and Swayze, *Donnie Darko* is packed with famous faces in minor roles

DAVEIGH CHASE

Donnie's little sister would go on to play the terrifying Samara in J-horror remake *The Ring*, and also reprise the role in 2009 spin-off *S Darko*.



MARY MCDONNELL

She played the First Lady of the United States in *Independence Day*, and the President of the Twelve Colonies in *Battlestar Galactica* – and Donnie's mum.



SETH ROGEN

The comedy star has a teeny tiny role as one of Donnie's classmates. He's the one who harasses Gretchen while she's waiting for the school bus.



KATHARINE ROSS

The star of *The Graduate* and *The Colbys* plays Donnie's awkward psychotherapist in a handful of small but memorable scenes.



FRAN KRANZ

Blink and you'll miss him, but Kranz (of *Dollhouse* and *Cabin In The Woods* fame) is the guy in the passenger seat of Frank's car, dressed as a clown.



There are still things that Richard Kelly wishes he could add to the film.



time the DVD was released, its combination of Eighties coming-of-age story and twisty science fiction made it a must-see. "That gives me faith in audiences that are capable of discovery, and capable of being resilient" says Kelly.

But he himself has never been entirely happy with it. "It's a painstaking process, making a film," he says. "I definitely am very obsessive about every detail. That's part of being an artist: your work is never really finished, it's abandoned." A couple of years after its initial release, Kelly went back and cut another version. Released in 2003, the Director's Cut adds some extra scenes, and also splices in extracts from the film's fictional *Philosophy Of Time Travel* book.

Yet Kelly still doesn't feel finished. "I'm not satisfied with either version," he admits. "There are still things I wish I could do, but I wanted there to be two versions. You can have an extended remix of a song and it doesn't replace the original, so people can watch whichever version they want. I'm grateful that it's endured and that we got to restore it, because now the image quality is where it should be. Blu-ray and DVD were never right."

Though there are many great things about *Donnie Darko* – the performances, the soundtrack, the care lavished on every frame – the most likely reason it has endured is because its challenging plot defines definition. As a perfectionist, does it bother Kelly that people are still debating what his film really means? Surprisingly, he says not. "This is a story that is open to many interpretations, and I welcome all of those interpretations," he says. "There's no right answer. There are plenty of wrong answers, but I'm always happy for anyone to bring their own interpretation to the film."

"That's what art should do: be inclusive to everyone." ☺



Donnie Darko: 15th Anniversary 4K Restoration is available to buy on Dual Format now, distributed by Arrow Video.

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

IT INSPIRED THE WACHOWSKIS AND IT'S STILL ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING AND COMPELLING CYBERPUNK STORIES PUT TO FILM. JOIN US AS WE PLUG IN TO REVISIT MAMORU OSHII'S GHOST IN THE SHELL...

Time Warp
Retro
Classic
Film



GHOST IN THE SHELL

Film

RUNNING TIME:

83 minutes

RELEASE DATE:

18 November 1995

DIRECTOR:

Mamoru Oshii

WRITER:

Kazunori Ito

CAST:

Atsuko Tanaka, Iemasa Kayumi, Akio Otsuka, Yukata Nakano, Tamio Oki, Tessho Genda

There's a good chance that by the time you first saw Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost In The Shell*, you had already watched a bunch of films that had directly referenced it, if not ripped it off.

Well, one specifically. If you talked about how much you loved *The Matrix* and had never seen anything like it before in certain circles, someone would have looked at you with a mix of excitement or condescending pity, depending on your friend group, and asked if you'd seen *Ghost In The Shell*.

More than 20 years later, and Oshii's vision, based on the manga by Masamune Shirow, still has the power to stun. There are visuals that continue to take your breath away, no matter how many times you've seen it. Watching Motoko Kusanagi, aka The Major, plummet from a high-rise window as her camouflage activates and takes her, flickering, out of view, or seeing her body straining and tearing as she attacks a robot tank in the film's final minutes... it's a film that understands how to present

the meeting point between humanity and technology in the most eye-catching and visceral way. Cyborg bodies lie on operating tables; eyes wide open, waiting to jerk painfully into life so government agents can plunder their consciousness for clues and information.

The glittering cityscape of *Ghost In The Shell* is modelled on Hong Kong (right down to the beer they're drinking), but there's a refusal to name the setting. We know we're in 2029, but the most important element of *Ghost In The Shell*'s cityscape is that it's a city. Skyscrapers loom and cluster, but life on street level is as chaotic and impersonal as ever. One of the most striking sequences in the film occurs at approximately the halfway point, when Oshii just shows us scenes of the city on a gloomy day in the pouring rain. While a film like *Akira* is almost defined by its neon-drenched Tokyo nights, *Ghost In The Shell* is harder to pin down.

Then there's the question of identity that sits at its centre. Like all great cyberpunk, the future may be full of mad technology, the story threads may be twisted almost to the point of incomprehensibility and the Big Ideas may be huge, but it's the people in this uncaring future that make the story resonate.

The Major is a cyborg working for a government team named Public Security Section 9. Section 9 is hunting a dangerous hacker known as The Puppet Master, who may be linked to a rival government agency, and who is 'ghost hacking' people who have cybernetic brains to do



his dirty work. As the team inches closer towards finding their target, the Major realises that she may have an opportunity to answer some questions that have been haunting her, but these discoveries won't come without a price.

It's a future in which cybernetic enhancement is de rigueur, and human identity has become a slippery concept that most prefer not to think about too much. The Major, however, is not one of those people, if she's a person at all. Her willingness to openly discuss her feelings about her state of being visibly upsets her colleagues, and her bad-ass partner Batou frequently looks confused or disgusted. But just how much of the original Motoko is left? She dives to the bottom of the sea, her weight a constant reminder of the ways in which she doesn't belong. She can drink beer on duty with her partner Batou, but her body can break down alcohol in an instant in case of emergency. There is no moment in which she is not reminded of who and what she is.

Throughout all of this, she is pretty unreadable. Her

About

The year is 2029. The world has been connected by a gigantic network, and cybernetics have advanced to the stage where nearly everyone has some form of technological enhancement. The Major is the cyborg leader of a government strike team that is hunting a hacker called The Puppet Master, a shadowy figure who has been hacking people's consciousness and controlling them. The hunt for this villain leads the team to question the extent to which they have been altered by these upgrades, and brings the Major to the brink of a new stage of being.



CLASSIC QUOTES

"CAN YOU OFFER ME PROOF OF YOUR EXISTENCE? HOW CAN YOU, WHEN NEITHER MODERN SCIENCE NOR PHILOSOPHY CAN EXPLAIN WHAT LIFE IS?"

PUPPET MASTER

"THERE'S NOTHING SADDER THAN A PUPPET WITHOUT A GHOST, ESPECIALLY THE KIND WITH RED BLOOD RUNNING THROUGH THEM"

BATOU

"I AM NOT AI. MY CODENAME IS PROJECT TWO-FIVE-ZERO-ONE. I AM A LIVING, THINKING ENTITY THAT WAS CREATED IN THE SEA OF INFORMATION"

PUPPET MASTER

"AND WHERE DOES THE NEWBORN GO FROM HERE? THE NET IS VAST AND INFINITE"

MAJOR

"I MEAN, HAVE YOU EVER ACTUALLY SEEN YOUR BRAIN?"

MAJOR

"CHIEF, YOU EVER QUESTION THE ETHICS OF THE NEUROSURGEONS WHO MONKEY AROUND INSIDE YOUR BRAIN?"

BATOU

"I GUESS ONCE YOU START DOUBTING, THERE'S NO END TO IT"

BATOU

"MORE THAN 20 YEAR LATER, OSHII'S VISION STILL HAS THE POWER TO STUN"



The unnamed city was based on Hong Kong.

TOP 5 CYBORGS

Sci-fi's
best of the
mechanical

ALEX MURPHY

(ROBOCOP)



1 The future of law enforcement isn't quite the man he used to be... he's something more. Still knows that cool spinning pistol trick though, and he can hold onto a grudge.

ROBOT BARRY

(ARCHER)



2 Archer's most entertaining nemesis is barely human after a series of upgrades, and he's not entirely in control. "You've sown the wind and now you shall reap... the Barry."

DEL SPOONER

(I, ROBOT)



3 The world-weary cop at the centre of this kind-of-okay take on Isaac Asimov's stories hates robots because of a combination of survivor's guilt and his own robot arm.



Consciousness can be hacked and people can be driven.

demeanour is typically calm or almost wryly amused, whether she's pondering the intricacies of her own existence or taking down bad guys. A calm facade does not mean lacking in character, however, and it is absolutely worth singling out the superb voice performance by Atsuko Tanaka. For all her enigmatic comments and total lack of panic, there's a real depth there, and it's kind of amazing how quickly we become deeply invested in her journey, as does Batou. For all his gruffness, her questions and her doubts begin to trickle into his brain.

At one point he asks their boss if he ever questions "the ethics of the neurosurgeons who monkey around inside your brain?" "They undergo psychiatric evaluations, especially those in security," answers the chief. "They're subjected to a stringent screening of their personal lives. Of course, the ones who check are only human." "I guess once you start doubting, there's no end to it," Batou muses.

It's the Major's more-than-human abilities that provide the film with some

absolutely thrilling sequences. The story begins with the Major arriving at a crucial moment during an attempt to stop a foreign ambassador accepting the defection of a wanted hacker. Just when it looks like things are about to go bad, the Major disconnects wires from her neck, and takes off her coat to dive, completely naked, from the roof. She clinically takes out her target, and falls into the night, activating her skin camouflage as she disappears from sight. It's instantly iconic stuff, and it's the kind of moment that inspired the Wachowskis... but enough about *The Matrix*.

There's also the garbage truck chase, which ends with the camouflaged Major brutally taking down a machine gun-wielding suspect, and there's the final battle between her and a tank robot that is pretty gruelling to watch, as she nearly breaks apart trying to take it to pieces, and is almost crushed in its pincers (before Batou shows up with a rocket launcher and blows it to smithereens).

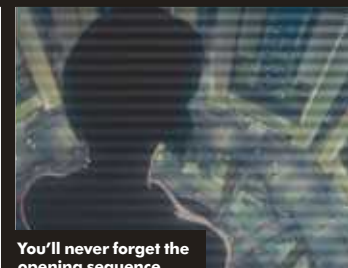
These sequences wouldn't have the impact that they do, however, if it wasn't for the emotional component and the deeply creepy ideas at the heart of the film. One of the film's obvious influences is Philip K Dick and *Blade Runner*, and there's a real tragedy to the garbage truck driver's realisation that his cherished memories are completely counterfeit.

All his chatter about his wife and daughter is the result of fictional memories that have been implanted there by the Puppet Master. The photo of his family that he tried to show his friend is just a photo of him, and the bachelor pad he's just been living in to give his wife some space is in fact his home of many years. When he asks if the memories will fade, he's told that technology to remove them is decades away, and that the current state of surgery is not to be recommended. The character is not returned to. Instead, he is left reeling in the police station interrogation room, a reminder of the terrifying potential of this technology and the stakes of the hunt.

As we discover in the film's finale, the stakes are pretty much life and death for The Puppet Master too.

A programme that has gained sentience and is horribly aware of the limitations of its own existence, it wants to enter the Major's body to experience some kind of legitimate procreation, creating a life that has never existed before. There's plenty of exposition that explains why the hunt for this programme has been so desperate (agencies with shady agendas, the potential for government embarrassment and all that jazz), the question that it poses the Major with is far more interesting. Will she stay the same, or will her essential self be completely lost?

As the process begins, the government forces arrive to destroy



You'll never forget the opening sequence.



"ONE OF THE FILM'S OBVIOUS INFLUENCES IS PHILIP K DICK AND BLADE RUNNER"

Cybernetic bodies are torn apart with brutal impact.



GHOST IN THE SHELL

RETRO CLASSIC

JAIME SOMMERS (THE BIONIC WOMAN)



4 Formerly a tennis pro, now an augmented agent. May or may not have cost more to create than Steve Austin.

PEARL PROPHET (CYBORG)



5 One of the most perplexing things about the Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle is that he's not the cyborg. Still, he's the only one badass enough to protect her.



their lost property, and both the Major and the Puppet Master's bodies are pretty much destroyed. In a wonderful moment of disorientation, the Major wakes up in the body of a child, which Batou explains was the only one he could find. It's absolutely fitting, of course, as the Major isn't quite the Major anymore. She's something new. "And where does the newborn go from here?" she asks, as she stares out over the city. "The net is vast and infinite."

Ghost In The Shell is as much a sensory experience as it is a story. The visuals, themes, and amazing soundtrack by Kenji Kawai all combine to create something endlessly rewatchable. The story was continued in TV series *Stand Alone Complex* and two later sequel films (*Innocence* and *Ghost In The Shell: The New Movie*), and Rupert Sanders' upcoming live-action film looks to be drawing story elements from pretty much every version. Regardless, it's Oshii's 1995 movie that we keep being drawn to again and again.

The anime classic *Ghost In The Shell* is back in UK cinemas on 25 January 2017. Head to www.gitsmovie.co.uk to book tickets.

The action sequences in the film are extraordinary.

WATCH FIRST



BLADE RUNNER (1986)

A clear inspiration not just for the visuals, but for the questions of self in a world where you may not be who you think you are.

WATCH NEXT



THE MATRIX (1999)

The Wachowskis have been quite open about how much they cribbed from *Ghost*. We forgive them, because it makes the film so cool.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Absolutely loved it, brilliant masterpiece of a film."
@Stubuscus



"Great film. One of the landmark anime titles that brought anime to the US into more mainstream conversations."
@halhefner



"Blade Runner defined the way we look at the dystopian future. *Ghost In The Shell* weaponised it."
@lennyukdeejay



"One of the best sci-fi movies made, not just in anime. Way up there with *Akira*."
@adrienne_kt



"140 characters is not enough. Watching it is mediation. The soundtrack is haunting. It's perfect."
@_MyNameisDrew



"AWESOME. AMAZING. OUT OF THIS WORLD. WAY AHEAD OF ITS TIME. If you haven't watched it... WATCH IT!!!"
@HahnShoLobo



THE SCIFINOW DOLLHOUSE QUIZ

ARE YOU AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE DOLLHOUSE FANDOM, OR IS YOUR HEAD JUST PLAIN EMPTY? FIND OUT WITH OUR QUIZ!

ECHO

1. What is the other word used to describe Actives in the show?
2. What is Adelle DeWitt's job title at the Dollhouse?
3. What did Boyd Langton do for a living before he became Echo's mentor?
4. Who is also known as November?
5. What is the name of the FBI agent, played by Tahmoh Penikett, who investigates the Dollhouse?

WHISKEY

6. Which two Actives fall in love over the course of the series?

7. What is Echo's original personality named?
8. Where are Actives sent when they are broken or cause problems?
9. Which corporation turns the Dollhouse into a global weapon in 2019?
10. What is the name of Topher Brink's assistant?

TANGO...

11. Whose original personality's name is Karl William Kraft?
12. Who is shot in the legs by butchers while on the way to the LA Dollhouse?
13. What name is given to someone who has had their personality wipe without another one being imprinted in its place?

14. What was Sierra's occupation before she had her mind wiped?
15. Which Active was cured of PTSD when they first arrived at the Dollhouse?

FOXTROT

16. Which Whedonverse regular played the rogue Alpha on the show?
17. How many episodes of *Dollhouse* aired overall?
18. What is the title of the Season One finale?
19. Which Whedonite actor plays recurring character Active Whiskey?
20. Which regular cast member also acted as a producer for the show?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system

			
16-20	11-15	6-10	0-5
TOPHER BRINK You may be a genius, which is a good trait to have when it comes to quizzes, but you've also proven yourself to be somewhat less than trustworthy. Start working on that, and maybe your quiz team will start working on welcoming you back.	ECHO Even though you hit a lot of obstacles along the way, you always take a hands-on approach to problem solving. You know when you need to continue searching for answers and when things are heading towards a dead end.	ADELE DEWITT Ultimately, your high-ranking title doesn't count for much – you're still clueless. A bit slow on the uptake (possibly due to all that booze), you often need someone to spell out what is happening in a clear, calming voice.	PAUL BALLARD Your resumé makes you look really smart, but in reality you often have no idea what the hell is going on. You don't let it stop you though; you're always up for a bit of good, old-fashioned investigating to get to the bottom of a juicy mystery.

ANSWERS: 1. DOLLS 2. DIRECTOR 3. HE WAS A COP 4. MELLIE 5. AGENT PAUL BALLARD 6. VICTOR AND SIERRA 7. CAROLINE FARRELL 8. THE ATTIC 9. THE ROSSUM CORPORATION 10. IVY 11. ALPHA 12. MAG 13. A DUMBSHOW 14. SHE WAS A PAINTER 15. VICTOR 16. ALAN TUDYK 17. 27 18. 'EPTAPH ONE' 19. AMY ACKER 20. ELIZA DUSHKU

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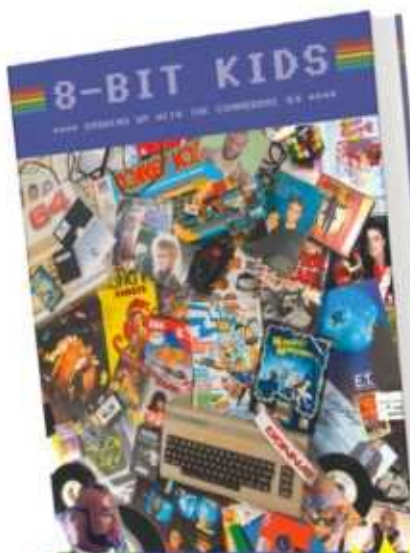
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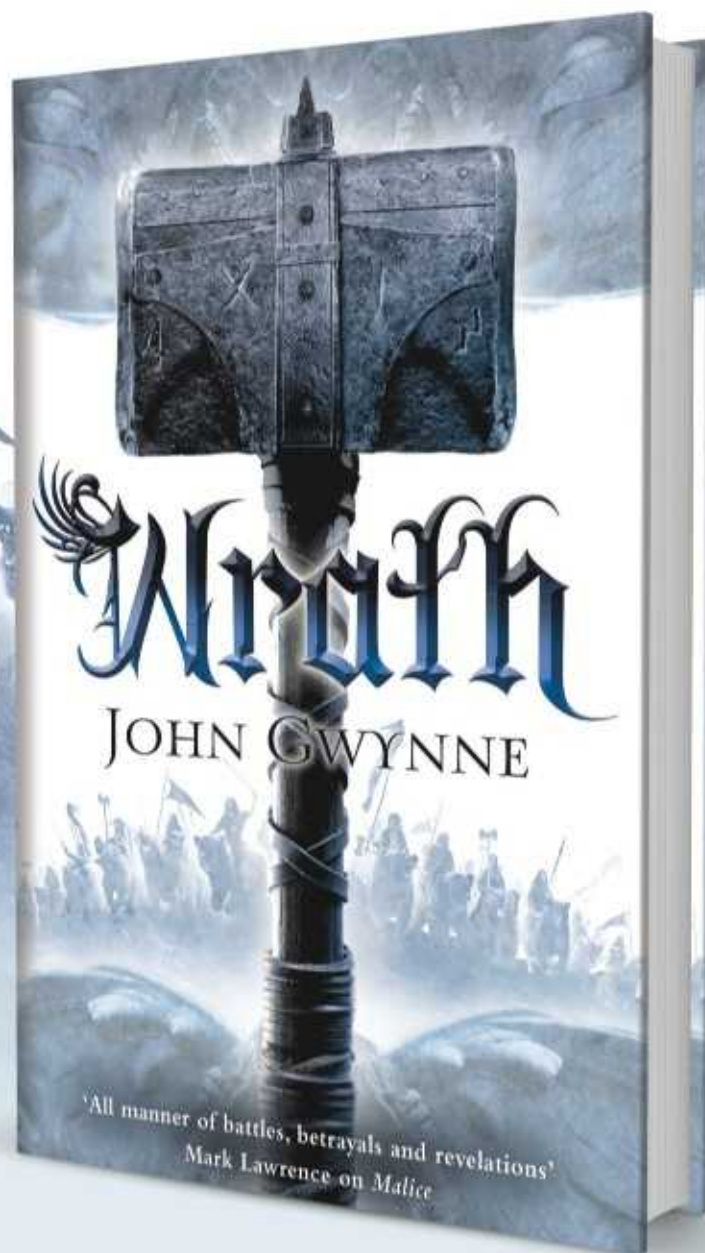
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